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LIFE OF ROBERT
MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

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ROBERT, MARQUIS OF SALISBURY
From a drawing by Lady Granby (Violet, Duchess of Rutland)
1889

LIFE OF ROBERT MARQUIS OF SALISBURY

BY HIS DAUGHTER
LADY GWENDOLEN CECIL

VOL. III
1880-1886

HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LIMITED LONDON
MCMXXXI

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Volume IV. to follow.*

PREFATORY NOTE TO VOLUMES III. AND IV.¹

So many years have intervened since the publication of the first two volumes of this book that the correction of errors contained in them must appear hopelessly belated. But one or two mistakes to which my attention has been called must be mentioned for the acquittal of my historical conscience.

The suggestion (Vol. I. page 27) that the great Darwin, in his old age, lost his appreciation of the beauties of nature was founded upon a single sentence in his autobiography. As his pleasure in beautiful scenery remained in fact peculiarly strong up to the end, it has been pointed out to me that the false impression left by this passage in the context in which it stands, ought to be corrected.

In several passages in the second volume, Count Andrassy is described as the Austrian "Chancellor." He never bore that title, but was simply known as the Foreign Minister of the Empire throughout these years of office.

The name of Lord Salisbury's personal private secretary, Mr. Richard Gunton, is wrongly given as Mr. Robert Guntan (Vol. II. page 13).

In enumerating the sources of information to which I have been indebted in the production of the two present volumes, I must mention in the first place some memoranda of personal recollections which have

¹ Volume IV. will be published shortly.

been kindly communicated to me. Two of these, by the late Lord St. Aldwyn and Mr. G. E. Buckle, are specifically acknowledged and described in the text. I received and am grateful for two others, whose contents have been drawn upon in the seventh and eighth chapters of the third volume. One, recording Foreign Office memories, came from the late Lord Sanderson, who served under Lord Salisbury for many years, first as Assistant and then as Principal Permanent Under-Secretary. His marvellous memory for all the details of this country's various Treaty commitments and his "perfect genius for drafting" used to be commented on with warm appreciation by his chief. The other came from Mr. J. S. Sandars, who, as private secretary to the then Mr. Balfour, assisted actively in the work of the Central Conservative Office, and has supplied several interesting notes as to Lord Salisbury's relations with that office and its chiefs.

Some explanation is due for the absence of acknowledgment to one source of information which naturally suggests itself in connection with those chapters—mainly in the fourth volume—which deal with foreign affairs. But, except for a few drafts, telegrams, and Cabinet memoranda preserved among Lord Salisbury's private papers, I have not made use of any official documents. I had intended at the outset to ask the Foreign Office for leave to do so, and have no doubt that, in so far as it accorded with the public interest, my request would have been met with the courtesy invariably displayed by that department. But at an early stage of my work I gave up the idea. My first and principal reason was that in the many volumes of private correspondence between Lord Salisbury and his agents abroad which have been preserved at Hatfield, and in the copies of his letters to the Queen, his colleagues, and other

friends which have been so generously communicated for the purposes of this book, I found an amount of material already at my disposal so large as to make me frankly shrink from adding to it. The years here dealt with were those in which his reputation and influence abroad reached their highest point, and when, therefore, the subjects dealt with in his correspondence covered a wide field of bewilderingly diverse interest. I felt that to extract the biographical content from the mass of documents before me and transmute it into narrative form would be a sufficiently serious task without superposing the consideration of official telegrams and despatches, to be numbered probably by thousands. The neglect of them appeared the more justifiable because I soon became convinced that they would add little or nothing to the elucidation of Lord Salisbury's own personality and policy. Owing to his individual method of work, the only source of information which from this point of view could compete with his private correspondence would have been a fuller record of his conversations with foreign diplomats in London. They were carried on without witnesses, and, except where some definite conclusions had to be recorded, remained officially unnoted. He generally included some reports of them in his private letters to the Queen, but these are incomplete and at all times only briefly summarised. In this connection the German Diplomatic Documents published since the War have proved invaluable. If M. Waddington's confidential reports home were as full and as freely commented as those of Count Hatzfeldt their publication would do more than anything else to fill the gaps which I am conscious still remain in this account of Lord Salisbury's policy during this period.

LIST OF PUBLISHED WORKS CONSULTED

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Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette.

The bulk of the quotations from this Collection are taken from Mr. Edgar Dugdale's translation—"German Diplomatic Documents, 2 Vols." The footnote references are to both works, except where the passage is not included in Mr. Dugdale's translation.

The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, Vol. III.

Disraeli's Life, by G. E. Buckle, Vol. VI.

Lord Cranbrook's Memoir, by A. E. Gathorne-Hardy, Vol. II.

Lord Randolph Churchill's Life, by W. S. Churchill, 2 Vols.

Parliamentary Reminiscences, by Lord George Hamilton, 2 Vols.

Modern Egypt, by the Earl of Cromer, 2 Vols.

Lord Carnarvon's Life, by Sir Arthur Hardinge, Vol. III.

Lord Goschen's Life, by the Hon. Arthur Elliot, Vol. II.

Life of 8th Duke of Devonshire, by Bernard Holland.

Correspondance diplomatique of Baron de Staal, edited by A. Meyendorff.

Letters of the Empress Frederick, edited by Sir Frederick Ponsonby.

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Britain Across the Seas, by H. H. Johnston.

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Expansion coloniale de la France, 1870-1905, by Paul Gaffard.

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CHAPTER I

HOME AND FAMILY LIFE

LORD SALISBURY used often to declare that the “swing of the pendulum,” which in his lifetime was looked upon as the most certain of electoral laws, was providential in the interests of efficient government. Five years of the strain of administration was as much as the average man could stand without a loss in mental vigour and, with it, of the fruitfulness in initiation and the capacity for instinctive judgment, and quick confidence in decision upon which effective statesmanship depends. In his own experience this limitation was, in fact, slightly exceeded. If the brief episodes of 1866 and 1885 be put aside, he was in office three times, for a period in each case of from six to six and a half years. On the earliest of these occasions—that which closed with the general election of 1880—the normal fatigue consequent upon six years’ tenure of office was aggravated by the serious illness with which it closed. His party’s defeat was therefore a fortunate event for him personally. He was quite unfit that spring to continue his work at the Foreign Office, though, had the Conservatives remained in power, he would probably have found it impossible to abandon it.

But the equal rhythm of the “swing,”—to prolong the metaphor,—did not accord in the same ideal fashion with his requirements. A brief interval of

rest sufficed for his mind to recover its spring, and within a year of leaving office his energies were again calling for full employment. In the eighties this was provided for him within the limits of his profession to a greater degree than when he had been last in Opposition. After Lord Beaconsfield's death he became the virtual, though not the acknowledged leader of his party. The course of the Gladstonian Government of 1880–1885 constituted a continuous challenge to Opposition attacks, and, under Lord Salisbury's guidance, the House of Lords took a prominent part in the political battle. It was a brilliant period in its oratorical history. To mention only the best-known names—Lord Salisbury, Lord Cairns, and Lord Cranbrook among the Conservatives stood admittedly in the first rank of parliamentary speakers, and in a diversity of styles they were met on equal terms by the Duke of Argyll, Lord Selborne, Lord Derby, and the inimitably dextrous debating of Lord Granville. There were great contemporaries in the House of Commons, but their speeches occupied only a small proportion of its sittings. On field-days in the Lords,—which the pertinacious challenge of the Opposition made sufficiently frequent,—the galleries, the Bar, and the steps of the Throne, would be thronged with Commons' members taking refuge from the dreary loquacity of mediocrities or the interminable interludes of Parnellite obstruction. The superiority of the Lords' debates, both in form and substance, became a commonplace of newspaper criticism.

“Stump”-oratory had, at the same time, received a notable impetus from the success which had attended Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian campaigns. Up to the last year of the previous Parliament, a few speeches in the smaller London halls or in the neighbourhood of his own country home represented all Lord Salis-

bury's non-parliamentary output. During the years from 1880 to 1886, he spoke on more than 70 public platforms in all parts of the kingdom, to audiences which in the majority of instances had to be counted by thousands.

These activities, however, did not suffice to fill the blank left by the cessation of his official work. There were divers matters of private interest which had been perforce neglected, and could now be returned to. He resumed the chairmanship of his county Quarter Sessions, which he had abandoned two years before on taking the Foreign Office. He took up botany again, and while at Puys added a collection of seaweeds to those of flowers which he had made in his boyhood. Laboratory experiments were restarted, and the technical correspondence with Mr. McLeod was re-opened. In one of its first letters he alludes to the disabilities which, returning a few years later in a more final form, were to make these years the last of his serious occupation with the subject. "I have had my head so full of more transitory matters that I have half forgotten the little science that I knew."

There were two other sources of home occupation, special to this period, which filled such interstices of leisure as were left. At the time that he left office, the invention of the incandescent lamp, by which electric lighting was at length controlled to practical usefulness, had just been announced. Lord Salisbury had been for some time impatient for the development. He had erected some *Jablokhoff* arc lights outside his house at Hatfield—mainly for the benefit of his guests' coachmen on the occasion of the annual county ball—and had tried to introduce them into the interior. For a brief period his family and guests were compelled to eat their dinners under the vibrating glare of one of these lamps fixed in the centre of the dining-hall

ceiling. No exertion of goodwill or courtesy could silence the plaintive protests of his lady visitors, and he would gird with growing despondency at the obstructions which feminine vanity offered to the conquests of science. He was saved from humiliating defeat by the timely appearance of the Edison-Swan lamp. While visiting in Northumberland in the autumn of 1880, he saw the system in operation at the Elswick works, and heard from Sir William Armstrong that he was about to instal it at Craigside, his own house. "Have you heard of Swan's electric lamp?" he wrote to Mr. McLeod. "It is very much on Edison's principle—incandescence, not arc—but it certainly looks as if it should answer. I saw it at Newcastle. If he is to be believed, you can maintain five or six lamps for each H.P.; they do not flicker, and they are not overwhelming to look at" (*November 1880*).

No expert middleman had as yet undertaken the installation of the new invention. It was an opportunity for independent action under conditions which were so untried as to have all the charm of scientific experiment, and Lord Salisbury did not miss it. He set his estate workmen to the task that winter, under the direction of a sympathetic clerk of the works, who shared his employer's taste for new ideas, and in the following summer Hatfield was able to contest with Craigside the honour of being the first private house in England in which the new light was established. There were no precedents to follow, and every step in the installation had to be extemporised. The power was provided by a sawmill on the river Lea, which still continued to cut up wood by day while working an electro-magnetic machine by night. It was situated about a mile and a half from the house, the conducting wires being carried across the park on telegraph poles. Their course lay partly through woods, and the stop-

page of the current by short-circuiting when the wind was high was one of the minor difficulties which had to be contended with. “Jem¹ and I have been devoting ourselves to the electric light, which of course has gone wrong ; and Jem has been all the afternoon climbing trees and cutting down twigs near the wires.”
(To Lady Salisbury, August 14, 1881.)

No method of accumulating power in secondary batteries had yet been worked out, though there were rumours of a French invention on the road. The current had to be conveyed direct to the lamps from the magneto-machines which produced it, and scientific authority had not yet even decided—or had not yet published its decision—as to the right kind of machine to be employed. All the conditions involved in the production of the current and its distribution through a large and complicated system of lighting were problems which had to be solved experimentally.

To Mr. Herbert McLeod,² June 11, 1881.

“Up to this time our experiments have met with fair success. For distant work—the source of power being the sawmills—the *Brush* machine seems to answer best. Its intensity is high, and therefore it transmits the power with great ease. But its revolutions have to be carefully watched—for if the machine was allowed to go too fast, the lamps would burn up ; on the other hand, if it goes too slow the unevenness of the strap tells and the light ‘winks.’ The lamps are arranged in (electrical) groups of eight—the eight being in series. A smaller number in series runs the risk of burning up. As the lamps are, when hot, about forty ohms each and sixty when cold (the line

¹ Lord Cranborne, then an undergraduate at Oxford. The 4th Marquis of Salisbury.

² Professor of Chemistry at Cooper’s Hill College. An early friend of Lord Salisbury’s and assistant in his scientific pursuits. He was a constant visitor at Hatfield. See *ante*, Vol. II. p. 12.

being about two ohms), the machine has to drive through a resistance of from three to five hundred ohms; but in doing so it does not require the water-wheel to turn at more than half its usual pace. We have hitherto not lit more than fifty lamps.

"The *Siemens* worked very well from a steam-engine close by, but the lamps are all parallel—none in series. At a distance it has not succeeded equally well. Its driving-power seems small. A *Gramme* alternating machine has also been tried. Hitherto we have been foiled by its tendency to burn up lamps, but its driving power is evidently high, and perhaps, when we are more familiar with the management of the lamps, we may utilise it. The line is mainly No. 6 copper wire. I do not think we have much trouble from leakage. I have tested the line we are using (we have two) and find that it has an insulation resistance of 200,000 ohms a mile in wet weather, which, I gather, is as much as is usually got in this country.

"But it is not comfortable to feel that nothing but the steadiness of a strap stands between you and perfect darkness. I am looking forward with great anxiety to the development of M. Faure's 'witch.' "

These experiments found their expression in a series of experiences which for a year or two relieved the monotony of domestic life at Hatfield. There were evenings when the household had to grope about in semi-darkness, illuminated only by a dim red glow such as comes from a half-extinct fire; there were others when a perilous brilliancy culminated in miniature storms of lightning, ending in complete collapse. One group of lamps after another would blaze and expire in rapid succession, like stars in conflagration, till the rooms were left in pitchy blackness, and the evening's entertainment had to be concluded in the light of hastily collected bed-candles.

The necessity of fuses was not yet recognised, and one evening a party of guests, on entering the Long Gallery after dinner, found the carved panelling near the ceiling bursting into flames under the contact of an overheated wire. It was happily a shooting party in which young men formed a substantial element. They rose joyfully to the occasion, and, with well-directed volleys of sofa cushions, rendered the summoning of a fire-engine unnecessary.

These various catastrophes were greeted by the master of the house with a purely detached interest. When the lights collapsed, his voice could be heard through the darkness amidst the general outcry of laughter and dismay, commenting meditatively upon the answer thus supplied to some as yet undetermined problem of current and resistance. The experimental stage was in time left behind, and in the summer of 1883 he was reporting to Lady Salisbury the exultation with which Mr. Shillito, his clerk of the works, had received an application from the head of Siemens' electric works for leave to bring down several distinguished foreign experts to inspect the successful installation at Hatfield.

The rather earlier invention of the telephone was only brought into practical use there at about the same time as the lights. But in 1877, soon after its publication in America but before it was on the market, Mr. McLeod brought down an elementary pair of transmitters which had been manufactured under his direction by his pupils in Cooper's Hill College. Lord Salisbury at once started to send messages from one end of the house to the other, laying the connecting wires loosely over the floors of the principal rooms, to the eminent discomfort of his guests. One of them, Mr. Robert Lowe, having caught his foot more than once in the wire entangle-

ment, took a pessimistic view of the new device, and prophesied in tones of gloom that the invention would become "a great bore." The experiments were renewed a little later with a scarcely less embryonic apparatus with which, to ensure comprehension, it was found necessary to keep to familiar phrases. Visitors were startled by hearing Lord Salisbury's voice resounding oratorically from selected spots within and without the house, as he reiterated with varying emphasis and expression, "Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle ; the cow jumped over the moon."

The other occupation upon which his superfluous energies were expended at this time differed from the first in introducing him to an entirely new field of knowledge and interest. He was compelled by circumstances to take up farming as a practical business, and, in marked contrast to his youthful disdain for all forms of country pursuit, became keenly interested in it. The season of 1879 is still recalled among agriculturists for its calamitous quality. On the Hatfield estate rents had been kept low, and Lord Salisbury did not suffer so heavily as many of his neighbours. But two or three farms were thrown on his hands, and there was nothing for it but to work them directly through salaried bailiffs. The nominal control thus forced upon him became, to his temperament, a challenge to make it real. He entered upon a study of the subject on its theoretic side. Works on agriculture, statistical returns, Government reports, began to litter his table and compete with history and theology on his bookshelves. He established an elaborate system of accounts, designed to check the results in expenditure and return of experimental as against customary methods, working out his conclusions to a precision of decimals which, though satisfying to himself, proved hopelessly mystifying to

his professional subordinates. His efforts to extend this personal supervision to the actual working of the farms were strenuous as far as his limitations of time and opportunity would allow. There were weekly discussions with his bailiffs, elaborately reasoned decisions as to the cropping of each field, and recurrent visits of inspection on foot or in his wife's pony-carriage. His aims were rigidly practical ; the elaborate apparatus and aesthetic accompaniments of the "model" farm were rejected disdainfully as extravagant dandyisms. Scientifically inspired developments met with more approval, but were subordinated to a cautious finance. "At present," he wrote to a friend who had suggested experiments in breeding, "my farming is in the rudiments,—I am only trying to make it pay. If I succeed in that, I may try to obtain initiation into the higher branches of the craft, such as the keeping of pedigree stock. But I do not as yet lift my eyes so high." (*To Ralph Palmer, Esq., November 1883.*)

On the other hand, he was ahead of his generation in plans for the electric mechanisation of his farms. When in 1885 the change of Government knocked all such activities on the head, he was already preparing the machinery for utilising, by day, for this purpose, the plant which lighted his house by night.

It is difficult to estimate the financial results of his efforts. He used to declare that, so long as he was in Opposition, he made the farms pay, but the experiment, so conditioned, hardly lasted long enough for valid conclusions. After his return to office, his supervision became only nominal, and his personal share in management resolved itself into the revision and analysis of costs and returns, which he continued till within a few years of his death. The doing of accounts he always turned to as a mental relaxation

from official work. He said that it occupied his mind without worrying him.

Indirectly, he profited in more ways than one by this experience. It brought him into actual touch with the rural mentality with which, through the "squire" element in his character, he was already instinctively in sympathy. The speeches which he addressed to his tenants at the annual rent-dinner at Hatfield, in which he would link up the daily realities of their business with the larger social and political issues in which it was involved, were received with an appreciation which would have been withheld from the generalisations of a mere outsider. From this period also can be traced that preference for living in the country which so markedly differentiated his later from his earlier years. In time, no doubt, this preference acquired independent existence through his growing enjoyment of natural beauty, but at first some association with the active side of life was required. As long as his energies were in their full vigour, his capacity for passive enjoyment of any kind was very small. His tastes had always a tendency to translate themselves into occupations, and, where that was impossible, their indulgence never satisfied him for long.

These years of Opposition synchronised with a crucial stage in the growth of the younger generation at Hatfield. When their father left office in 1880, the nursery had vanished and the schoolroom was fast passing. During the decade that followed, youth—automatically aggressive—asserted its claim to recognition as a vital element in his home life.

In their nursery days he had stood for little in their daily life, their mother satisfying all their social needs : he had no gift for the companionship of small children. With the magnificent inconsequence of their age, they visualised him alternatively as a somewhat detached purveyor of humour for their benefit and as an impersonal symbol of wisdom and supremacy. From this latter point of view his infallibility was axiomatic, his superiority over other men was not to be questioned. It was realised that in a certain arena of perpetual conflict, dimly apprehended, which men called the House of Commons, there were individuals who presumed to dispute his authority and resist his will. But that was as it should be,—they filled the necessary rôle of foredoomed opponents to his reincarnation of Jack the Giant-Killer. Politics, whose rumour penetrated in that house even to the nursery, resolved themselves into a drama of personal championship, romantically conditioned. In his other aspect he had an evident usefulness as the originator of serviceable nicknames both for things and persons. Epigram was ignored as a function of wit, but it was fully appreciated in its essence of brevity and appropriateness. Since he never modified the polish of his style in addressing them, his chaff was for the most part mystifying. But its intention was accepted as "funny," and it served its purpose as affording opportunity for a more patently humorous response in the form of crude *tu quoques* and derisive epithets. This war of wits was unhampered by any one-sided claim to verbal respect. There is a family tradition to the effect that a young French girl, whom Lady Salisbury had introduced into the household for educational purposes, having astounded a dignified governess by addressing her as "goose," defended herself on the plea that she had heard the word used

so often by the children to their father that she had assumed it to be a token of affectionate respect.

As they grew older, there were occasional direct interpositions in their affairs which remain memorable from their rarity. One such was invited by the action of a majority of the small community in preparing to mete out justice to an isolated rebel against its un-written laws. Their purpose did not go beyond a discipline of tauntings, judicially directed, but their father, discovering what was on foot, startled them by the rigour of his protest. They were hotly convinced of the righteousness of their cause and of the injustice of allowing the delinquent to pursue his course unchecked. But argument was in vain. They were told that they must make the best of it somehow, and every plan for retaliatory action was met by an uncompromising prohibition. *Nothing* could excuse such a breach of charity or good manners between the members of one family. His own manners to the children, whether he spoke in jest or in earnest, were unfailingly polished : "My father always treats me as if I were an ambassador," was the murmured reflection of a youth in his teens, "and I *do* like it."

Another intervention was also congruous to parental example. The young people had hailed with enthusiasm the news that their father had perpetrated an unprecedented interference with schoolroom arrangements by decreeing that lesson-time was to be shortened from five hours to four. But the enthusiasm was a little chilled by sequent explanations. He did not believe, he told them, that at their age they were capable of giving concentrated attention for more than four hours in the day. That was why the change had been made, and he wanted them to understand that that *was* the reason and that that was the kind of attention that would now be

expected from them. The subjects upon which they were working mattered very little;—what mattered supremely was that they should learn *how* to work, and the essence of that art was never to give less than the whole of their wills and minds to whatever they were doing. This lesson was reinforced a few years later when his boys went to Eton and, with caustic comments upon the public-school system, educationally considered, he warned them against the inevitable temptation offered by class-work to the habit of half-attention—the most fatal, he declared, that a man could acquire.

It was fortunate, perhaps, that the part which he took in the direction of his young children's lives was only sporadic and subordinate. He carried respect for the liberty of the subject to a reckless extreme, and on one occasion protested seriously against his wife's infringement of it in the person of a child of ten. There were few decisions of juvenile judgment in which, when left to himself, he was not prepared tacitly to acquiesce: “N. has been very hard put to it for something to do,” he wrote of a schoolboy who happened to have been left for a short time under his sole care at Hatfield. “Having tried all the weapons in the gun-cupboard in succession—some in the riding-school and some, he tells me, in his own room—and having failed to blow his fingers off, he has been driven to reading Sydney Smith's Essays and studying Hogarth's pictures.” “He may be able to govern the country,” was his wife's comment on such occasions, “but he is quite unfit to be left in charge of his children.”

But, after all, the difference between them was only one of degree. Feminine common sense, working in fields of familiar experience, recognised inevitable limitations. But in larger matters Lady Salisbury's

attitude was sympathetic to her husband's. The influence on the one hand of a single-hearted faith, and on the other of a native disdain for moral weaklings induced a practical compulsion of responsible independence on her children from an early age. Rules and regulations were reduced to a minimum, and this external liberty became the opportunity for a sensitive development of conscience. The religious instruction which she gave them, and of which she devolved no part upon others, was broad and elaborate, combining history with theology and appealing to the intellect and imagination as well as to the spiritual sense. But it was accompanied by very little drawing of morals. That was tacitly assumed to be the affair of her pupils.¹ The illimitable claims of New Testament teaching were left to impress themselves upon their awakening consciousness, restricted as little as possible by secondary deductions and applications. No intermediate screen of human authority was suffered to mask the completeness of their spiritual obligation and dependence. Those years of "irresponsible boyhood," whose memory is so often regretfully invoked, had a very brief existence in the experience of the young Cecils.

Lord Salisbury's share in this preparatory education, though acquiescent, was passive. The strong impression, spoken of in an earlier volume of this book, which his dependence on the Holy Sacrament made upon his children early in life, owed more to practice than to precept. Direct references to his own experiences in faith or worship were not wholly wanting,

¹ She complained once of the friends who would worry her by wanting to know upon what "system" she trained her children. "If I were to tell them the truth they wouldn't understand." She had got no system, she said. She taught her children to say their prayers and come to the Holy Communion. That was all. "It is not I who train them, but God the Holy Ghost."

but were rare and unemphasised. He was constitutionally incapable of edifying discourse whether by word or pen, and his children, prepared by their mother's training for self-dependence, accepted his reserve as a matter of course. On one occasion, Lord Shaftesbury, the great philanthropist, then near the close of his life, finding himself in the company of two of the boys, dwelt to them upon their privilege in the possession of their father and urged them to treasure carefully all his letters of moral and religious counsel. They were considerably embarrassed at having to confess that they had never received a line from him which could bear that description. On their return home, one of them delighted his parents by gravely remonstrating with them upon their default as placing him in a position of invidious singularity : "The other fellows all get letters of advice from their parents; we never do."

It would be impossible to fix upon any precise period of their growth as that at which Lord Salisbury's influence began to assert itself tangibly over his children's minds. During the decade now under consideration it had become supreme. In later years its mark was inevitably blurred through the maturing of individual temperaments or under the influx of a new time-spirit. But the impression which it stamped upon them never wholly disappeared, and, in one respect certainly,—in its energising power, in the unresting activity of purpose which it engendered,—it was of a permanent and decisive importance in their lives.

It is unfruitful, perhaps, to try to analyse the means by which a strong personality influences those in touch with it through the mere fact of its existence. But there were conditions of impact in this instance which it is unsatisfying to dismiss as merely indifferent.

First in the order of opportunity, one may reckon,

with whatever apparent paradox, that renunciation of direction which has been already alluded to. This eliminated what is perhaps the most common impediment to paternal influence. Moral direction, even in the mild form of proffered advice upon questions of conscience, must always run the risk of rousing into activity the instinct for rebellion which is inherent in nearly all youth, and which the youth of this family were certainly not deficient in. But, as towards their father, it never attained conscious existence, from the mere fact that he never, overtly or tacitly, made any claim upon their deference. If young man or woman asked his advice as to the wisdom or expediency of alternative courses, he would readily give it them. But he would rigidly abstain from expressing any opinion as to what they ought or ought not to do from the point of view of duty. If that question were forced on him it would be at once dismissed with the comment, "That is a matter for you to decide." Thus, at an age when many boys and girls are either, according to their temperaments, exulting in or conscientiously struggling against the impulse to reject their parents' standards, these young people would, as often as not, be taking anxious counsel together as to how they could best discover their father's judgment upon some doubtful decision of conduct. Diplomatic methods were sometimes resorted to ; an intermediary commissioned to make detached enquiry ; or the question posed as an interesting but strictly impersonal problem of ethics in the course of general conversation. The difficulties involved may have heightened the value of the verdict when obtained, but they formed a perennial subject of complaint : "It's so tiresome of him ; I wish he would understand that I don't care either way. I only want to do what he would think right."

In the field thus cleared of initial obstruction, perhaps the strongest single instrument in his children's unconscious subjugation was his uncompromising candour. This was no mere matter of truth-speaking in answer to challenge. It was all-pervading. As he owed nothing to general opinion in the formation of his thought, so he never took refuge behind its authority in expressing it. His opinions, his standards, his motives were presented in language which habitually ignored conventionally correct assumptions. The shibboleths which obtained in the schools of thought of which he was in general the adherent were even more exposed than others to his derisive repudiation. So that no utterance of his could ever be passed over as what was to have been expected from a Tory, or an aristocrat, or a Churchman, or what not. It was always his own, claiming no vicarious respect, allowing of no vicarious disregard. And, as nothing was urged as of authority, so also there was no edifying profession to blur the outline of his example. All the time, in what he said as in what he did, his children were brought, inescapably, face to face with the unalloyed fact of his personality.

Incidentally, this stimulating candour averted another more superficial danger to which family influence is sometimes exposed. When adventurous youth first passes from the home atmosphere to that of the world outside, the inrush of new ideas and new points of view tends to make commonplace and stale those which have been familiar to him from his childhood. He may not reject these ; he may continue to acquiesce in them ; but for a period at least they lose interest for him. But Lord Salisbury could not be acquiesced in : the challenge of his thought compelled active response, and the freshness of its expression imparted by comparison to all competing

talk a triteness for which no novelty in content could compensate. The young sons of the family, on their return home from whatever other company, would constantly comment upon the contrasting dulness of the society which they had left.

But none of these conditions could have been fully effective had it not been for what was the most notable external characteristic of this household—the intimate companionship which existed in it between the two generations. This was in part due to Lord Salisbury's need for achieved intimacy as a condition for enjoyment of intercourse with his fellows. Intercourse on equal terms with his children began as soon as they were able to understand him without being "talked down to,"—an exercise of which he was always incapable,—and it soon became an irreplaceable element in his social well-being.

Whenever parents and children were alone together talk flowed freely. It was always conducted on a basis of assumed equality. Though the children, so far as intention went, were ready and indeed anxious for discipleship, their ardour for utterance did not always allow the intention to materialise. Sometimes, when their gathering was complete, as in holiday times at Puys round the dinner-table or on rambles along the cliffs, the excitement of expounding their own ideas to their father, or of turning aside to slay one another in argument, would sweep away all reticent restraint and give him the opportunity—readily welcomed—of slipping quietly into the rôle of listener. This consummation would be suddenly realised, with a general shock of conscious guilt followed by a momentary silence. But the only way of repentance open was to start some fresh subject for discussion. Any intimated apology or crude appeal for his opinion would have been useless—the

assumption of an equality of standing had always to be maintained.

But there were other times, especially when numbers were fewer, when the topic would be initiated by himself, and their discussion of it kept within fairly tentative limits. The book—of history, science, biblical criticism—which happened to be occupying his after-dinner readings would become a text for discursive reflections upon its subject matter, interspersed with caustic criticisms on the author's treatment of it ; public happenings would provoke comments on their causes or probable issues, and, from these, long avenues of political deduction would open out and be followed to fields far distant from the starting point. Or perhaps some train of irresponsible thought in which he had been indulging would be elaborated and played with and theories would be launched, mainly as imaginative exercises and without prejudice to their easy abandonment. Sometimes, in a mood of graver philosophy, he would ponder aloud in meditative augury as to the goal towards which some observed current of world-thought was tending, and the response of his companions would become more frankly interrogative in search of clearer guidance. But though hypotheses, sometimes illuminatingly suggestive, might be thrown out, deliberately approached conclusions could rarely be extracted from him on these occasions : he was taking holiday from purposeful thought.

Amidst much that was more common to general opinion there were characteristic axioms of political ethics which repeatedly appeared in these irresponsible talks. The essential cowardliness of optimism (in his use of that word an irrational or unproved foundation was always presumed) ; the obliquity of quixotry—which he would define as “a display of moral vanity

masquerading as virtue" : the cruelty involved in an indulgence by the trustees of power in either of these falsities at a nation's cost. The manifold evil of even passive self-deception would be insisted on ; the moral obligation of clear vision : " To defend a bad policy as an ' error of judgment ' does not excuse it—the right functioning of a man's judgment is his most fundamental responsibility." Reverence for truth and reality as the testing touchstone for what is admirable in statesmanship was the note recurrently struck.

But when his company—as happened occasionally, especially with its feminine elements—sought to give personal application to such and such-like dicta by dilating upon the iniquity—" wickedness " was the word generally used—of some politician in the opposite camp, he was disappointingly unwilling to follow them on this ground of enlivening actuality. He had a favourite metaphor for expressing his protest. One could be convinced, he would declare, that certain combinations would produce poison or explosives, and act accordingly without feeling called upon to apportion moral responsibility for the operation of the chemical law. " That is not my concern and does not interest me. Do look at the question chemically ! "

In historical discussions one recalls the quasi-exultation with which he would point out the failure of individual effort to deflect the larger currents of human action. Certain theses would be familiarly selected for illustration : the proved futility of theorists to whatever school of thought they might belong ; the worthlessness of forecasts based on logical calculation ; the evil which has repeatedly been wrought by the best intended policies ; the hopeless incongruity between aim and result which dominates history. It would have been a depressing gospel for young auditors but for the consciousness, always con-

veyed, that this hewing away of secondary standbys might serve to clear the vision of an infinity beyond. Merged in the mystery of indiscernible purposes, facts which were disturbing to man-made theories could be faced without distress. And, if there remained some unavowed revolt against the implied call to a renunciation of visible results, his listeners had consoling present proof of its compatibility with a persistent will for adventure. No boy among them, as they were already aware, could hope more confidently during conflict or be more acutely depressed by defeat than the philosophic expounder of these examples of historic failure. A conclusion of fatalist passivity might be logical, but it was barred by the facts of their daily experience.

He rarely, if ever, initiated discussion of Christian apologetics, but, if the subject came up in conversation, the part which he took in it would be characteristically militant. The dogmatism of negative critics, the questions which they begged, the contradictions which appeared in their metaphysic, would be trenchantly dealt with ; or disrespectful fun would be made of the systems of rationalist morality or worship of humanity by which it was proposed to replace Christianity as a social force. He showed a complete confidence in the effective strength of his case. On one remembered occasion he tossed a magazine across the room to a girl of fifteen, inviting her directly to read an argued attack upon Christianity by Mr. Frederic Harrison,—“to see what rubbish these people can write.” The invitation was eminently successful, its proud recipient straining every faculty she possessed to justify the implied trust in her critical powers.

Under such influences the small community developed a certain note of rational disdain towards unbelief, which was in curious contrast to the fascinated

dread of the temptations of the intellect with which so many children of religious parents have been started out upon the world. But he cannot be said to have instigated it. His attitude was rather represented by his recommendation to one of his sons when he went up to Oxford to forswear controversy until he had taken his degree. He was sending him to the University, he explained, to complete his education, and not for the purpose of investigating the grounds of his religious faith,—a task, he added, for which he was at present wholly unfitted. Years before, when he was protesting in Parliament against the opening of the Universities to all forms of religious and anti-religious propaganda, he had based his protest, not on the fear of perversion of believers, but on the observed law that the result of plunging immature youth into an atmosphere of religious argument was to induce later a settled indifference to the religion argued about. It was characteristic of the nature of his own assent that he looked upon the judgment which comes from experience of life as an essential equipment for securing true belief. To encourage the innate curiosity of youth to a purely intellectual occupation with spiritual matters before that preparation has had time to operate must falsify values, and may well issue in a lasting deadening of the spiritual sense.

It would not be giving a true picture of his conversation on matters theological and ecclesiastical if the occasions were omitted when the impish spirit of mischief by which he was sometimes moved—especially, so his family would declare, when he had been for too long under the restraint of decorous company—would take possession of him, and he would indulge in a series of provocative paradoxes or a sword-play of mocking criticism from which his fellow-

believers were by no means exempted. Youth, fundamentally conventional, would at length be driven to deprecatory protest, and Lady Salisbury would close the sitting with an expression of devout thankfulness that no stranger had been present. This was fortunate on more grounds than one, for there were well-defined limits, clearly understood by this audience, but which might well have been ignored by the uninitiated, as to what were permissible objects for irreverent comment. Memory recalls one or two occasions when these were trespassed upon by outsiders in Lord Salisbury's presence, and when the drastic snub that followed left the transgressor in no doubt as to his offence.

An assumption of equality in knowledge was sometimes an embarrassing corollary to that of an equality in status. There would be recondite allusions offered as familiar, or references to some learned book, "which you have no doubt read." When he was met by a blunt profession of ignorance he would receive it, in spite of all previous experience of a similar kind, with an ever new and pained surprise : "When are those fallow brains going to be cultivated ?" So far as book-reading was concerned, he was himself largely responsible for the defect which he deplored. When curiosity was aroused upon any subject it was so much easier to gather information at second hand through his inimitable clarity of statement, with its enlivening accompaniment of irony and epigram, than to search for it through long dull books. With some members of the family reading became regrettably at a discount.

There were evenings at Hatfield and in Arlington Street when the family conclave would be reinforced by Mr. Balfour, then achieving his earliest successes in the House of Commons, and the talk would be at its best. His presence imposed no restraint ; he had

been an intimate of the house since boyhood ; his sympathetic wit, his delight in his uncle's verbal audacities and exact appreciation of what they stood for, put him into perfect touch with his company, while the challenge of his equal cultivation and lightning quickness of apprehension would rouse Lord Salisbury to a fuller exertion of his faculties. The latter's powers of discourse were in no case sufficient to keep the conversation going without response. He couldn't lecture, and his children had on occasions to stretch their mental muscles to the utmost to make the contribution required of them. Their reward was variously stimulating, apart from the incidental widening of horizons ; stimulating to their capacity for alert apprehension as the point of some suggestive epithet or paradoxical epigram flew past them in the moment of utterance ; stimulating to their appetite for knowledge, to their sense of humour, and above all, perhaps, to their powers of clear thinking. "Would you mind defining ?" "I don't know that I quite understand what you mean by . . .," would be the politely bracing rejoinders to any expression of slip-shod thought.

If conversation of the character hitherto described had formed Lord Salisbury's only contribution to intercourse with his children it might have been a source of instruction and edification, but would hardly have achieved companionship with them. Of necessity such talk stands out in memory for the impression that it made, but in fact it was only an occasional embroidery on a groundwork of more everyday material. He took his part in the discussion of daily occupations, domestic happenings, parochial and neighbourly business, gossip of all sorts and degrees which forms the staple of most household talk. To the exchange of the small moneys of political news all

parties would contribute,—from the minister's report of the last conversational indiscretion of a foreign potentate as it had reached him through diplomatic back passages, to the rumours collected by wife and children in drawing-room or club as to the true reason why Jones, M.P., had voted against his party in the last division. In the transmission of social gossip, Lord Salisbury was handicapped by a hopeless incapacity for its accurate retention. During the weeks in which the household remained at Hatfield, while he "daily-breaded" to London, his failure in this respect was an abiding trial to the female members of his family. The announcement of an approaching marriage—"I was told to be sure and tell you"—was merely tantalising when the name of the bride or bridegroom had been forgotten—and sometimes both. And there was a risk of embarrassing consequences in the information that Lord Three Stars had either inherited an unexpected fortune or would shortly make his appearance in the divorce court,—Sir Blank Blank's reputation hanging upon the alternative issue:—"You cannot expect me to remember which is which!" On the other hand, he would compete on equal terms with his wife in their reports of the incidental humours which seemed always to abound in their day's business.

The young people's own affairs came in for their full share of attention. Even the egotism of youth, as portrayed in present-day fiction, could not have complained of lack of interest on the seniors' part. When the sons began to enter upon their professions this interest found specialised expression. With the politicians among them no effort was needed, and their father received as much as he brought in the interchange of what Lady Salisbury used to call "green bench gossip," past and present. But the others took

him further afield. He would talk legal "shop" with a budding barrister with an appositeness which may perhaps have been derived from his early reading of law, kept from rusting by his practice in the mechanism of legislation. His experience in the management of men and in the analysis of their springs of action could be drawn upon effectively in discussing his parochial problems with a young curate. But a greater effort was required when his fourth son took a commission in the Guards, and, though under full pressure of work at the time as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, he sought, to the general amusement, to give actuality to his interest in a subaltern's duties by embarking upon a serious study of Lord Wolseley's *Soldier's Pocket Book*, which at that time was the recognised manual on military life.

Sympathy of a less deliberate and more intimate kind was not wanting. His vision was not always equally acute, but he would often detect, or even—like an anxious woman—have exaggerated suspicion of the presence of undeclared trouble. Once he was on the alert, it was vain to try to conceal from him the existence of either headache or heartache, though he rarely imparted his discovery to the person concerned. All emotional utterance was alien to him ; he shared to the full in the normal Englishman's reserve, and used to defend it as a decency of the soul comparable to that decency of the body which is generally accepted as laudable. Where his affections were concerned, this reserve had in it a distinctive note of diffidence. It was not of the same kind as that incapacity for believing himself socially welcome, which he had inherited from his isolated boyhood, and against which his wife was always protesting. He believed all right in the affection which others had for him, but he was diffident towards it in the sense that,

though very specially dependent on it, he never treated it as belonging to him of right. When instances of jealousy among his acquaintance were reported to him, he was pitiless in condemnation : it was a vice for which he would admit no excuse. It was, in fact, one outside the field of his temptations. His own gifts of affection were measured without stint, but he never seemed to condition them, even subconsciously, by any claim to a return. It was a projection upon the emotional side in him of that selflessness to which his political associates bore witness in their business relations, and whose pervading presence, as it was shown in the daily give and take of home life, made the man himself to those who lived with him of such infinitely greater importance than his achievements or his fame.

One side of his children's lives at this period was frankly outside his comprehension, and perhaps on that account was a source of frequent pre-occupation. He used to be haunted, needlessly, by a dread lest, in the social demands of his public position, their youthful right to those pleasures of life, which meant nothing to himself, should be forgotten. Perhaps, indeed, had he been their sole parent, their lives in this respect might have become unhealthily one-sided. Not that there could ever have been danger of their confusing his personal distaste for amusement with disapproval of it. "Clubland" (his usual synonym for the "idle rich") was always referred to with contemptuous condemnation ; but otherwise there were no, even tacit, inhibitions. But in the contagion of his and their mother's company, their home atmosphere was over-crowded with interests, intellectual, political, religious, —always purposeful. Abandoned to their own initiative, they—or some among them—might have become inert to any effort after the lighter side of life, and so

have fallen, as chosen associates of great men have done before them, into that abyss of priggishness which waits on self-conscious seriousness.

But Lady Salisbury's energy knew no limitations. The management of the Hatfield household, and of its stables and gardens ; the care, there and at Cranborne, of the material and social needs of the cottage tenants and estate dependents ; county functions and county philanthropy ; scattered social work of different kinds in London, including at one time the weekly visiting of a slum parish in Westminster ; the organisation of massed hospitality in Arlington Street and at the Foreign Office ; the more onerous personal entertainment of ambassadors, colleagues, and leading political supporters ; and, added to all these things, a full participation in the excitements of her husband's personality and career,—left her in no way submerged. She saw to it that there should be no reproduction among the younger generation of the joylessness of their father's youth. The great rooms which, forty years before, had offered the solace of their silence and emptiness to a lonely boy's overstrained nerves, were now filled in every recurrent holiday season with the noise and movement of young merrymakers expending their vitality in an overflow of animal spirits. It found various expression—in the playing of tumultuous games ; the chorusing of popular songs round the piano—much out of tune ;—the continuance into the small hours of the morning of the breathlessly vigorous dances of that generation. Assistance at these revels was not always confined to contemporaries, and there was special joy when an ambassador was inveigled into pursuing a long-legged subaltern through and over the furniture of the Long Gallery in a game of “follow-my-leader,” or when a Cabinet Minister lent the dignity of his co-operation to a polka

or a country dance. The mistress of the house, impervious to fatigue, spurred the revellers on to fresh efforts. But its master—having satisfied himself as to the sufficiency of the electric lighting, whose provision he always regarded as his particular province—would seize the first opportunity to escape silently to his study downstairs. His incapacity for social pleasures was a recognised failing, and the young people would watch his unobtrusive evasion with glances of indulgent amusement, signalling to one another to assist and cover his retreat from his guests.

The only form of social entertainment which he excluded from what was otherwise a universal tolerance was the performance of private theatricals—at least, in his own house. He had a curiously strong objection to this, and from early days the children were warned that, in view of his feelings, it would be useless to turn their thoughts that way. As they had none of them any talent for acting, the prohibition did not weigh heavily upon them. He used to refer approvingly to Sir Thomas Bertram's attitude in *Mansfield Park*, but whether his objections were founded upon Miss Austen's presentment or on some personal experience of his own, he never explained. It may have been inspired by his native fastidiousness where intercourse between men and women was concerned, or by the elaborate preparations which theatricals require, and the consequent waste of working time which they involve.

On the other hand, the professional theatre took its full toll of his family's attendance at this period. Lady Salisbury was catholic in her tastes,—bad plays, she declared, were only less enjoyable than good ones. Her husband was less easily pleased. He went occasionally to the opera, when a work of the old-fashioned, melodious Italian school was being performed. He had

a genuine love of that music, but declared that he had been born too soon to learn enjoyment of any other. There were rare visits with one or two chosen companions to plays which promised satisfaction to his critical taste in literature and acting. But they were seldom successful,—any failure from his standards destroyed his enjoyment. After his resumption of office in '85, these experiments in amusement ceased altogether. He would complain that the seats were uncomfortable, that the draughts gave him cold, that the bad air gave him headache. The high pressure at which he was working made him sensitive to every physical discomfort and the pleasure received was not enough to compensate.

But, after all, it was the interests that centred round his own profession that gave the determining colour to life at Hatfield. Politics not only formed a recurrent text for his meditative musings or conversational theorising, but they were an unceasing source of excitement to his family in their immediate activities. They had a notably emotional quality in the eighties, which was given full value to by the remarkable aggregate of talent in the leadership of that epoch. The names of Gladstone and Hartington, Salisbury and Churchill, Chamberlain and Parnell, were in themselves war cries of inspiration in the party fight. And—at least from the Tory point of view—its episodes were sufficiently moving. The bloody disasters in the Soudan with the fierce appeal of Gordon's heroism and abandonment ; the struggle engaged in '84 between the two Houses amidst conflicting thunders of popular enthusiasm and resentment ; the continuous drama of Ireland's criminal disorder ; the sudden catastrophe of the Liberal schism in '86 ; the battle of the Union, fought through nerve-straining alternations of hope and fear to exul-

tant victory : these things could not fail to appeal both to the combatant and crusading instincts of an active-minded youth whose home was the headquarters of one of the fighting forces. Politics were the dominating interest in the background of life and supplied all its thrills, even where they were not its actual occupation.

The interaction between this interest and their filial relation to the Conservative chief was not what might have been obviously expected. Their sentiments towards him in his public capacity contained all the essential ingredients of hero-worship. They had an unquestioning belief in the truth of his ideals, the wisdom of his statesmanship, the strength and confidence of his leadership. They were convinced of his superiority on all these counts to any living competitor. It would have been a natural sequence for them to have essayed, even to the point of indiscretion, to forward the propagation of this personal faith. But, in fact, not only did they scrupulously avoid giving outside utterance to it, but in private their energies were largely occupied in discouraging the participation of fellow-worshippers at their shrine.

They were constrained to this paradoxical course by their father's idiosyncrasies or, perhaps more accurately, by their own over-acute consciousness of them. Lord Salisbury undoubtedly disliked compliment in all its forms. His feeling on the subject is expressed in a note of apology written to a lady friend who had remonstrated with him upon the chilling reception which he had given to a civil speech :

“ My wish was to dissuade you from saying ‘ civil,’ that is, complimentary, things. However kindly and sincerely meant, they are to me always intensely disagreeable. I dislike hearing them said to other people, one to another, and naturally, much more do

I dislike them being said to myself. Very likely I may carry my aversion to them further than is justifiable in what is a mere matter of taste. But—c'est plus fort que moi." (*March 16, 1885.*)

His children, with the sensitiveness of youth to any touch of embarrassment in their company, were nervously impressed by this characteristic in him. It is not too much to say that the dread lest they should unguardedly express any sentiment of admiration in his presence or become accomplices in the expression of it by others, was the only real fear which he ever inspired in them. Their mother, endued perhaps with a more perfect knowledge, would sometimes—greatly daring in their eyes—report some complimentary appreciation which it had rejoiced her to hear. There was a certain note of defiance in her manner when she did so, as though repeating something which, whether he liked it or not, it was good for him to be told. And the skies didn't fall; though he would listen in glum silence or with a perfunctory, "It is very good of them!" followed by a hasty change of subject.

But when compliment became caricatured, as it was in his eyes, in the attentions of lion-hunters or idlers in search of a spectacle, there was no doubt as to his finding it intolerable. His children, awed by his disdainful ironies and by the depression which would overwhelm him in the presence of such exhibitions, early constituted themselves a bodyguard of defence against them. Mr. Schomberg McDonnell, his private secretary throughout the greater part of his Prime Ministership, shared in their intimacy of personal affection and comprehension, and, defying the criticisms of the Carlton Club, would sometimes lend a helping hand. But it was recognised that he owed a double loyalty to his chief's public and private

interests. Colleagues, parliamentary followers, and party officials were to be ranked frankly among the enemy. The sons and daughters felt that upon them alone devolved the championship of his privacy. In such an atmosphere the erection of a family idol was plainly out of the question. You could not invite worshippers to a shrine whose god would infallibly slam the door in their faces, particularly when you yourselves were pledged to assist him in the act.

Lady Salisbury, though she sympathised and generally co-operated, did not wholly approve. "You ought not to encourage him," she used to say reprovingly. Such intrusive attentions were a necessary accompaniment of a public man's popularity, and he must learn to submit to them.

They increased with his fame, and became, vicariously, as great a source of trial to his family as to himself. If they could not be prevented it was urgent to spare his feelings by ignoring them, but it was not always easy to do so. In London, where everyone is free from peculiar notice, he was safe, and in the neighbourhood of his own home his figure was too familiar an object to arrest attention at ordinary times. But to walk with him in any populous place outside the metropolis, or in his own park when on Bank Holidays or other special occasions it was invaded by strangers from outside Hatfield, was a nerve-wracking experience. One kept as long as possible to sheltered paths ; the strained alertness of observation which began as soon as these were quitted for more peopled thoroughfares, and the dread with which the approach of every passing group of pedestrians was watched, were revelations of what the feelings of a fugitive from justice must be like. When recognition was seen to be inevitable, anxiety became acute as to the form which it would take. A simple

salute mattered little ; it would either escape notice or be responded to with comparative equanimity. The pause and prolonged stare with nudgings of companions to impart discovery could perhaps be passed over ; feverishly sustained conversation might be successful in diverting his attention from it. But if the recognition found audible expression, the worst had happened. A silent black gloom would overspread his spirits, and all further enjoyment of the walk was at an end.

A contrasting picture must be presented to distinguish between this attitude and that of insensitivity to human sympathy. It was at a mass meeting of working men, when emotion had been stirred both in his audience and in himself by the concluding passages of his speech. The roar of prolonged cheering that followed did not fully satisfy the feeling that had been aroused, and the front ranks of the meeting broke and thronged towards the platform. Its occupants, conscious of his normal attitude, came hurriedly forward to stop the onrush. But with a quick gesture of comprehension he interfered. "Don't stop them, let them come ! " he said imperatively, and then stood forward, his own eyes shining with the contagion of feeling, while the long line of excited men leapt up one by one on to the platform to pass and shake him by the hand. This was the real thing, and perhaps his capacity for recognising it will partly explain his angry impatience with what he held to be sham imitations of it.

CHAPTER II

1880-1882

LEADERSHIP IN THE LORDS

THE general election of 1880 had issued in the most severe defeat which the Conservative party had known since the great Reform Bill or was to know again till the cataclysm of 1906. The Liberals came back with a majority of 107 of their own men over the Conservatives. With the 65 Irish Nationalists who had hitherto always been reckoned as their supporters, their parliamentary majority was 172.

Lord Salisbury passed the period of the election at Biarritz, where he was recovering from the severe illness from which he had suffered in the winter, and the greater part of 1880 was devoted to the task of completing this convalescence. He returned from Biarritz to join his colleagues in the formalities of surrendering office, but left England again in June for Homburg. By then, troubles were already beginning to gather round the new Ministry. Its opponents traced them to the election oratory which had helped them to power, but in one important direction the immediately originating cause was a calamity of nature. The distress which followed the disastrous harvest of 1879 was especially acute in Ireland ; in the over-populated districts of the west it almost amounted to famine. Discontent was inevitable ; agitators were on the spot prompt to guide it along

the lines of race and class antagonism, and when the Liberal Government took office, a ferment of disorder was already at work. Their first attempt at dealing with it was crude. They introduced a Bill¹ to suspend for the time being the landlord's power of eviction for non-payment of rent. That power was the only security which the law provided for recovery of the debt, and as an agitation against payment, irrespective of capacity, was already in full progress throughout the island, and was being supported by a series of agrarian crimes, the proposed measure was repudiated by many outside the ranks of the Conservative party. One of the Ministers, Lord Lansdowne, resigned rather than consent to it; seventy of their followers in the House of Commons refused to vote for it; and when it was rejected in the House of Lords by an overwhelming majority drawn from both sides of the House, Ministers acquiesced with scarcely more than a verbal protest. It was a bad start.

The other two parliamentary incidents which are alluded to in the following letter from Homburg to Lady John Manners were the Ground Game Act, introduced that session by Sir William Harcourt, and the scandals evolved by parliamentary mismanagement from Mr. Bradlaugh's refusal to take the oath of allegiance.

To Lady John Manners, July 8, 1880.

“ I am leading a perfectly idiotic existence—so forgive me if my letter bears traces of it. I have ceased to be able to understand much about English politics—only I have a dim apprehension that we shall none of us have any rents, rabbits or religion when the session is over, so you had much better bring Lord John over here. I do not see any rabbits—nor

¹ The Compensation for Disturbance, Ireland, Bill.

much religion, but I have reason to believe (from what I pay myself) that rents are flourishing. Here we only care for one kind of legislation—that by which the beneficent Dr. Dietz regulates the diets of his votaries. . . . We walk like twopenny postmen—we drink (salt water) like fishes, and, when we are not engaged in one of those two operations, we repair the waste of exhausted nature by slumber. The terrors of the next walk, or the next drink, fill up the mind, to the entire exclusion of the frivolities with which the night watchers of St. Stephen's torment themselves.”

The rest of the year was spent abroad in Switzerland or on the Riviera, except for a short interval in the autumn when he took his share in the Opposition campaign of criticism with speeches at Taunton, Hackney, and Woodstock. The main theme was Ireland and the rapidly increasing disorder there. It was early in this autumn that an elaborately organised ostracism, extending to a deprivation of all the necessities of life, was established against a Captain Boycott, a land agent, with his family and household and all who worked for him. Under the direction of the recently formed Land League, this form of pressure was rapidly reproduced in other parts of Ireland and, enforced as it was by the threats and outrages of midnight marauders, became a supremely effective weapon of coercion in the League's hands. The administration was impotent, rents were defiantly withheld, and the challenged class, with rare exceptions, submitted helplessly to the denial of their rights.

Lord Beaconsfield, from his sick solitude at Hughenden, was indignant at their want of spirit. His own courage never showed to finer perfection than in this last year of his life. Oppressed by the extreme of physical weakness, in difficulties about money, in utter domestic loneliness, he constantly refused to acquiesce

for his party in the defeat which he accepted as the close of his own career. He turned increasingly for sympathy to the colleague in whom he recognised a kindred spirit. Lord Salisbury went down to Hughenden in October and, during the winter, the two carried on a correspondence,—discussing plans for the future, canvassing the possibilities of defection in the enemy's ranks, or inveighing against the apathy or timidity of their less militant followers.

One subject which was discussed between them was the older man's inevitably approaching withdrawal and his wish to be succeeded in the leadership of the party by his lieutenant in the Lords. He spoke of it to himself and insisted upon it to his family ;—he wanted to have the question settled ;—no other nomination was possible. This anxiety intensified his annoyance with a medical edict forbidding Lord Salisbury's return home from Nice in time for the meeting of Parliament : “ One of my dreams was that in February I should be sitting behind you in the House of Lords and that you would be leading H.M.'s Opposition. . . . I think your absence deplorable, but your presence at the sacrifice of your health would be calamitous ”¹ (*December 27, 1880*).

The weather reinforced the authority of the doctors' timetable. It was at the end of this January that a famous snowstorm swept over England, suspending the railway service and isolating London from supplies for forty-eight hours. Lord Salisbury did not get back till February 19. His leader's gallant struggle was then approaching its last stage and two months later the end came. In moving in the House of Lords for the erection of a national monument to the dead statesman, he used language which was noteworthy, in view of his earlier years of antagonism :

¹ *Life of Disraeli*, vol. vi. p. 595.

“ I have not the same title to speak on this subject as many of those beside me have, because my close political connection with him was comparatively recent. But it lasted through anxious and difficult times, when the character of men is plainly seen by those who work with them. And upon me, as I believe upon all others who have worked with him, his patience, his gentleness, his unswerving and unselfish loyalty to his colleagues and his fellow-labourers, have made an impression which will never leave me as long as life endures.” (*Hansard, May 9, 1881.*)

“ Le roi est mort——” : unfortunately, the proverb applies only to the untroubled successions of heredity. The public of party clubs, lobbyists, and newspapers, having paid its respectful farewell to the dead statesman, turned with avidity to discuss the devolution of his double office as leader in the Lords and of the Conservative party in the country. The press teemed with articles and paragraphs hinting inspiration from various authoritative sources, and debating more or less invidiously the qualities and defects of the personalities involved. To the leadership in the Lords the Duke of Richmond, by prescriptive right of previous tenure, had the most immediate claim. He was a man of independent will and cautious judgment, one of the leading authorities in the country on agriculture, with whom, on the squire side of him, Lord Salisbury had many points of contact. A newspaper paragraph announced, as a fact known to those behind the scenes, that he had a marked personal dislike to Lord Salisbury. The Duke wrote indignantly suggesting a public denial ; a little uneasy, perhaps, as to how far his colleague might credit the malicious

gossip : " I contend that the editor has no right to assert that I dislike you. I should like to tell him in parliamentary language that he was a liar." Lord Salisbury deprecated taking any notice of the paragraph, but, with a compelling simplicity, set the Duke's mind at rest as to any evil results to be feared from it. " It did not occur to me to attach the slightest importance to the statement, because I knew you had always been very indulgent to me—more than my uneven temper sometimes deserves—and that you could have no cause for shewing that indulgence if you disliked me " (*April 28, 1881*).

Though there were said to be dissidents, there was never any uncertainty as to the decision of the Conservative peers to choose Lord Salisbury as their leader. On the other hand, there was from the first, in spite of Lord Beaconsfield's known views upon the subject, a preponderating opinion against nominating him also as leader of the party. The reasons for this were partly no doubt personal, but, more powerfully, institutional. Cautious men might be alarmed as to where his militant advocacy and indifference to criticism might lead them ; Tory democrats might suspect him of reactionary Conservatism. But at least as strong as either of these influences was the jealousy felt by " Commons' men " for the prerogatives of their own House. The wife of one of these colleagues, Lady John Manners, appears, nevertheless, to have entered the lists in support of his full leadership ; writing both to himself and to Mr. W. H. Smith on the subject. In his answer, having told her that the Duke of Richmond and Lord Cairns were going to propose and second his election as leader in the Lords, he added : " Their view inclines to the expediency of leaving alone for the present all questions of ' party ' leadership ; and in this I am disposed to

think they are right. The difficulties in the way of any other course would be considerable" (*May 3, 1881*). Mr. Smith was more explicit in deprecating her suggestion :

Mr. W. H. Smith to Lady John Manners, May 4, 1881.

"No one can have any doubt that, if his health remains good, Lord Salisbury is the natural leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords, and I do not doubt that in all questions of policy which affect the interests of the party as a whole, he will consult with Northcote and his late colleagues in the House of Commons in order that we may present a united front to the enemy.

"It is in the House of Commons that the great battle will have to be fought, and there the policy of the party will from time to time have to be announced and asserted. I am sure Lord Salisbury will recognise this."

The decision actually come to was a compromise on this exclusively House of Commons' view. On May 9, Lord Salisbury was unanimously elected as leader of the Conservatives in the House of Lords, and at the same time the public was given to understand that he and Sir Stafford Northcote¹ would lead the party in the country as a duumvirate with equal powers.

This decision may be taken as having been representative of parliamentary opinion at the time—with probably a concession on the part of the majority to the more ardent feelings of Lord Salisbury's personal advocates. Four years later, the Queen's selection of him to the post of first authority was accepted not only with unanimity but as a matter of course. This

¹ Sir Stafford Northcote had led the Conservative party in the House of Commons since 1876, when Mr. Disraeli went to the House of Lords. He had been Chancellor of the Exchequer in the late Cabinet.

change of attitude on the House of Commons' front and back benches was undoubtedly induced by the gift for popular leadership which had been revealed in him in the interval. The primacy from which he had believed himself to be for ever excluded by the advent of democracy came to him in the event on the most democratic of titles—the unequivocal demand of the electorate over-riding all intermediate parliamentary prejudices.

His first session as leader in the House of Lords was on the whole a peaceful one. It was an Irish session, devoted by the Liberal Government to the pursuit of what was then their favourite prescription for the pacification of Ireland ; a combination of concession and coercion which deprived either policy of any chance of success. The coercive element was supplied on this occasion by a Suspects Act, which empowered the Irish Government to arrest anyone on suspicion and detain him indefinitely in prison without trial. The “remedial” element consisted in a Land Bill based on what were familiarly known as the three F’s. It deprived the landlords of all control over their property and, incidentally, of a substantial fraction of its value, and was profoundly shocking to the ideas of British Conservatism. But it was less so to those of the Irish landlords themselves. The custom, long prevalent on the majority of their estates, which relieved them of all charges for equipment had necessarily also limited their opportunities for direction and management. The Land Act of 1870 had further diminished these, and with Midlothian denunciations still ringing in their ears, and a general strike against rent threatened at their doors, they were not inclined to risk anything for the preservation of what was left.

Lord Salisbury had recognised from the first the hopelessness of championing a cause so defended. In

the winter he had written to Lord Beaconsfield, who had been anxious for resistance to the uttermost : “ We are left with a choice of giving in or else of being Hibernio Hiberniores.” He now criticised the Bill drastically in debate, denounced both the principles which it embodied and the methods which it employed, and prophesied its failure as a message of peace to Ireland. But so far as action went, he contented himself with proposing one or two amendments of no great importance, which, after some show of resistance and a compromise effected on minor points, were accepted by Government.

His predictions as to the failure of the Act as a message of peace were justified in the course of the same autumn. One side were embittered, the other were not satisfied. “ You have put the tenant into bed with the landlord,” was an Irishman’s comment, “ and his only cry will be, ‘ One more kick and the beggar’s on the floor ! ’ ” The situation was aggravated by the anger which the working of the Suspects Act aroused. Though the obligation of supporting the executive in the face of disorder kept Lord Salisbury silent in public, he expressed in private his dislike of this measure and his disbelief in its efficacy. It was one thing in his view to strengthen executive power for the punishment of crime or, in so far as it was necessary for the preservation of order, to enlarge the categories of crime by legislation : it was quite another to lock up men against whom no offence could be proved and keep them indefinitely in prison at the arbitrary will of a Minister or police official. His passion for individual liberty reinforced his judgment in its conviction that the measure would prove as ineffectual as it was provocative. Largely under the influence of its provocation the Nationalist leaders set themselves deliberately to secure a bad reception

for the Land Act. They openly incited the peasantry to further claims on their landlords' property : Mr. Gladstone denounced their " gospel of plunder " ; and in October Mr. Parnell and two of his House of Commons' lieutenants were arrested under the Suspects Act and lodged in Kilmainham Gaol. " If I were Parnell I would never forgive it," was Lord Salisbury's muttered exclamation when he read the news. Something of the same spirit, though disciplined to responsible caution, could be detected in his speech on the opening day of the session in the following February :

" One of the Ministers of the Crown stated during the Recess that coercion was natural to the Tories. If it is not natural to the Liberals I can only say that they acclimatise to it very readily. Since the Revolution, I imagine that Parliament has never met under such circumstances as are existing now. Has there ever been a time when the representatives of the people have been detained in prison by the authority of a Minister of the Crown under a suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act at the time when Parliament met ? Has there ever been such a thing as 60,000 men being found necessary to keep up the faint vestiges of order now remaining in Ireland ? Has there ever been a time when 500 men have been kept in prison simply on the authority of a Minister, without trial or proof of guilt ? " (*Hansard, February 7, 1882.*)

He qualified this condemnation by recognising the exclusive right of " the responsible Ministers of the Crown " to decide as to what steps were necessary for the preservation of order, and by admitting that the arrest of the leaders might have been justified by success, if it had not been deferred until their influence was already fully established. The one thing that was self-evident was the total failure of that policy of

“ conciliation ” to which the fortunes of the Irish landlords had been sacrificed.

Indeed, the condition of Ireland during that winter and spring of 1881-82 was worse than it had been within living memory,—worse than it was to be again for more than thirty years. Mr. Parnell had retorted on his arrest by issuing a “ No rent ” manifesto, in which he exhorted all tenants throughout Ireland to withhold their rents altogether until their leaders were liberated. It was generally complied with. Such evictions for non-payment as were attempted had in each case to be carried out with the assistance of two or three hundred soldiers and police. Though the prisons overflowed with suspects, outrages increased. Achieved murders were relatively few ; it may be that on that very account their details, whether of pathos or atrocity, struck the public imagination with the greater force. Their restriction in number was partly due to the elaborate measures taken for individual protection. When the House of Commons met in February '82, the Chief Secretary, Mr. Forster, stated that there were over 1300 persons living under constant guard of soldiers and policemen. The statistics of lesser crimes reached a figure of thousands—midnight raids, the beating and “ carding ” of men and women, the burning of buildings, the wholesale mutilation and torture of cattle, boycotting, intimidation, and, as the constantly accompanying result, the law of the Land League everywhere superseding the law of the land.

Contrasted with the terrible experiences reserved for a later generation, the record may not appear shocking, but the England of that day was stirred by it to a horror-struck indignation that reacted against the Government which allowed such things to continue. Ministers replied only with deprecations that

were almost cries of despair. Speaking at Liverpool in April, Lord Salisbury having traced the trouble primarily to the fatal policy which had been pursued of trying to appease disorder by the repeated transfer of other people's property to those who were guilty of it, poured scorn upon this plea of "inherent impossibility":

" You may talk of difficulties as you will, but everyone knows perfectly well that if Ireland were under the government of the German Emperor, or the Indian Viceroy, or the French Republic, or the American Republic, the present state of things would not last. Under it, liberty has become a farce, constitutional rights a mere superstition, and, whatever the means employed may be,—however much they may threaten the cohesion of the party now in power —repressive measures must be adopted." (*April 14, 1882.*)

A fortnight later the Government's position received a further shock through the publication of the transaction which came to be known popularly as the Kilmainham Treaty. It originated in the urgent desire of Ministers to get Mr. Parnell out of prison again at any cost. It was not easy, as, no sentence having been pronounced upon him, there was no automatic limitation to his confinement but the expiration of the Suspects Act. Incitement to disorder had been the reason announced for his arrest, and to save official consistency it was necessary, therefore, that he should be induced in some form or other to recant this incitement. He was approached through a confidential intermediary. Ministers pledged themselves to introduce legislation for the relief of tenant farmers who were in arrears with their rents, and he, in return, promised to secure a cessation of the crime and intimidation which at present ravaged Ireland. In

the words of the intermediary employed, “The conspiracy which has been used to get up boycotting and outrages would now be used to put them down.” The secrecy with which this negotiation was conducted inevitably broke down and only served to add a more sinister colour to the transaction. When its terms had been dragged piecemeal from the reluctant lips of Ministers in the House of Commons, there was a general outcry of wrath which was not confined to the Opposition ranks. The British conscience, more sensitive on such points than it has since become, was profoundly shocked at the Queen’s Ministers having accepted help from a man who could claim control over a criminal organisation. Mr. Forster and Lord Cowper, the Chief Secretary and the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, resigned office rather than be parties to the arrangement; their action was supported by a considerable section of Liberal opinion, and it was believed by sanguine Tories that a dissolution at that moment would have reversed the verdict of two years before. Strong in their consciousness of popular support, they gave full vent to their feelings in the House of Commons, and in a series of recriminatory scenes, taunts were flung at the Treasury Bench such as few British Ministers have had to endure.

When the subject came up for debate in the House of Lords a week or two later, Lord Salisbury approached it from a wholly different angle. The personal element was hardly touched upon in his gravely judicial analysis of the bargain’s essential character. He began by defining his own attitude towards the rival methods of conciliation and coercion :

“ Much has been said in the present debate about conciliation and the value of conciliatory measures to Ireland. I am very far indeed from disputing that view or from wishing to adopt any other tone in

dealing with the Irish question. I am fully aware of the enormous superiority of methods of conciliation over methods of coercion, where methods of conciliation can be successfully applied. But, unfortunately, conciliatory legislation and deterrent legislation differ in one most material particular. Conciliatory legislation is infinitely superior, but it depends for its efficacy on the circumstances under which it is used, and on the manner in which it is applied. Deterrent legislation, if vigorous and strong, at least deters, whatever the value of that process may be, but conciliatory legislation only conciliates where there is a full belief on the part of those with whom you are dealing that you are acting on a principle of justice and not on motives of fear. Where there is a suspicion or a strong belief that your conciliatory measures have been extorted from you by the violence which they are meant to put a stop to, all the value of that conciliation is taken away."

He dwelt, in carefully impartial language, on the fatality with which, whatever may have been their motives, the conciliatory action of Her Majesty's present Ministers had throughout been so timed and conditioned as to enforce the belief that it originated as blackmail offered to outrage-mongers. This Treaty of Kilmainham was a culminating instance, and he closed his speech on a note of prophetic warning more sad than denunciatory :

" This belief which H.M.G. have contrived to impress on the Irish peasantry is not a belief which will hamper their legislation or hinder their policy alone. The measures of the last two years have so deeply impressed on the minds of all—whether they are loyal to England or the reverse, whether they approve the policy of the Government or the reverse—that each successive step has been extorted by a constantly rising demand of agitation and of outrage that for years and generations the impression will remain. It

will be a shadow that will fall not only on the path of this Government, but on the path of many future Governments that will succeed it. It will hinder every effort at conciliation. It will make the necessity of coercion again and again a lamentable incident in English policy, and therefore the Treaty of Kilmainham—not only of itself, but as the culminating point and the typical instance of the system on which the Government have proceeded in their legislation towards Ireland—will long be remembered as the cause of constantly increasing evils in Ireland, and as threatening with serious danger the connection which is of vital importance to both countries." (*Hansard*, June 5, 1882.)

The Irish leaders had been successfully got out of prison, but any prospect of their co-operation in the task of stopping crime by consent was dispelled with sinister rapidity. Mr. Parnell had probably overrated his influence with the physical force party,—in any case, he was not allowed the time in which to exercise it. Four days after his release the news of the Phoenix Park murders, with the shock of horror which it sent through the country, decided without appeal the question of an immediate strengthening of criminal procedure in Ireland. A "Peace Preservation Bill" was introduced, far more effective for its purpose than the Coercion Act of the previous year. The Nationalist members went at once into opposition, resisted the Bill to the uttermost of their power, and from that moment declared unremitting war against its authors.

In parliamentary society the feelings roused by this crime were intensified into a personal emotion by the inclusion—accidental as it was subsequently found to have been—of Lord Frederick Cavendish, the new Chief Secretary, as one of the victims. His long membership of the House, his family relationships in the political world, and his own charm of character,

all contributed to the effect produced, and it was emphasised by his close connection with the Prime Minister himself. He had been for years Mr. Gladstone's private secretary, and was the husband of a much-loved niece. A slight incident can be recalled which was typical of the limitations of Lord Salisbury's political passion, even when it was inspired by the strongest convictions. On the day after the murders—a Sunday—a party of relations and intimate friends were dining in Arlington Street. Conversation was general, and occupied wholly with the news from Dublin—as was probably the case at every dinner-table in London that evening. Lord Salisbury was asked as to a public meeting in which he was engaged to speak that week. He said that he had already postponed it. “I suppose,” commented one of the party lightly, “that it would hardly do to attack the old man just now?” He assented with a brief monosyllable, and then added in a tone so low as to be scarcely audible even to his next neighbour, and with a sudden painful contraction of his features, “and besides, I couldn't do it.”

In due time the promised Arrears Bill was brought in. In itself a very minor detail in the story of the Irish question, its passage became the occasion for a significant incident in Lord Salisbury's career as a political leader. Its object was, where poverty could be shown to exist, to wipe out the tenant's arrears altogether; and it provided that, for this purpose, the State should share the loss with the landlord. It was contended on the Opposition side that the safeguards provided against the dishonest as distinguished from the impoverished debtor were totally insufficient to protect the interests either of the tax-payers or the landlords. In the anarchy of principle in which Irish land tenure had become involved, Lord Salisbury did

not look upon the question in itself as one of much importance, and he was prepared to decide the action which he should recommend to his supporters by their wishes and by considerations of general expediency. In mid-July there appeared no doubt as to what the former were. The Conservative rank and file in both Houses were still under the influence of the excitement stirred in the country over the Kilmainham Treaty, and were in a militant mood. At a Carlton meeting the Commons members pressed the Lords to amend the Bill in the sense required and to adhere to their amendments. The Lords themselves went further, and were anxious to reject it on its second reading. The "shadow Cabinet" met, and two amendments were drawn up. Their logical defence was complete, but it was certain that the Government would refuse to accept them. In the view of the leaders this was an argument in their favour. A County Franchise Bill, involving a large measure of redistribution, was in prospect. It was the conviction of the Conservative party managers, supported by the hopes and intentions which were recurrently expressed by Radical orators, that the present large majority would be used for the purpose of manipulating the new constituencies in a manner fatal to Tory representation. A dissolution at this moment would certainly reduce the present majority and would thereby make such tactics impossible.

Lord Cairns was abroad, and Lord Salisbury wrote to report the decision to which he and their other colleagues had come :

To Lord Cairns, July 21, 1882.

" It would be too long to trouble you with the arguments which led us to these conclusions. Of course, their logical value in debate went for a great

deal, but we were further influenced by the information that reached us on all sides, that the mass of the Conservative peers were anxious to reject the Bill on the second reading, and would only be restrained from that course by the promise of stiff amendments, and on the other hand by the opinion clearly held by Northcote, Winn,¹ Cross, and Smith² (and myself), that if we could provoke a dissolution it would be a good thing."

The information referred to proved correct. At a meeting of Conservative peers called in Arlington Street on July 21, the day on which the Bill passed its third reading in the Commons, the only difficulty was to persuade them to moderation. "Most of those who spoke," Lord Salisbury wrote to Lord Cairns, "intimated that they had come with the intention of insisting on resistance on the second reading." Two of them sent messages that they must refuse to vote for anything less final; only one speaker demurred to the amendments as being too strong. "They, however, consented to my proposals,—I pledging myself that, if they forbore to oppose the second reading and carried these amendments, I would, in any event, vote for them to the end."

On the last day of July the amendments were put to the vote in the House of Lords and carried by large majorities, Lord Salisbury repeating in public the pledge which he had taken in private that he would adhere to them as "vital." Their consideration by the Commons was fixed for a week later. During the interval Mr. Gladstone allowed it to be known that he would insist upon his own text to the point of dissolving Parliament if the Lords persisted in their

¹ Mr. Roland Winn, chief Conservative Whip. Created Lord St. Oswald in 1885, when Mr. Akers Douglas succeeded him as chief Whip.

² Mr. (subsequently Viscount) Cross and Mr. W. H. Smith—Sir Stafford Northcote's principal lieutenants in the House of Commons.

rejection of it. The threat, though it must have been anticipated, produced a remarkable revulsion of feeling among Conservatives in the Lower House. The electoral auguries were no longer so favourable as they had been a week or two before. The bombardment of Alexandria had obscured Irish affairs in public interest; the savage scenes by which the passing of the Peace Preservation Act through the Commons had been accompanied had largely exonerated Liberals from the damning imputation of being in alliance with the friends of criminals. Confidence in victory, buoyant a few weeks earlier, was now nowhere so strong as to drown the inevitable outcries of individual members conscious of insecure seats. Sir Stafford forwarded some of their protests to his colleague,—though with a quite unmoved recommendation to ignore their contents. It was not the only occasion of emergency when his unruffled placidity put to shame the hesitations of more truculent combatants.

The amendments were rejected in the House of Commons on Tuesday, August 8, and the 10th was fixed for the final vote of the Upper House, on which the fate of the Bill would depend. On Monday had come a letter from Lord Cairns, who had had in fact no responsibility for the original decision, saying that he could not follow his colleague further and intended, therefore, to leave for Scotland on Wednesday night. Even after this secession a “diminished vote” seems to have been the extent of Lord Salisbury’s fears. Except from two individuals, he received no intimation whatever, either by word or letter, of any change of purpose on the part of his followers, and to his temperament it was inconceivable that men who had spoken as they had done on July 21 could act as they now intended to act on August 10. He invited them to meet him at Arlington Street that morning for a

final discussion of the afternoon's programme, and that evening wrote to his wife, who was abroad, an account of the meeting and its sequel. The attendance was ominously small.

To Lady Salisbury, August 10, 1882.

"The peers have distinguished themselves. . . . The meeting came to-day. I made a strong representation of the danger of accepting Gladstone's terms and said that I in any case felt bound to vote against them. Then the Irishmen got up one after the other and advised surrender,—some qualifying it by saying that, if I insisted, they would vote with me. Most, however, said they would not. Richmond made a speech against me saying he would not. Carnarvon and Cranbrook said they would vote with me, but —! This went on for some time. At last I begged them to divide—those who were for resistance to one side and those who were against it to the other. . . . In all about twenty supported me. On the other side there were sixty. Of course, in this state of things it was useless going to a division in the House. I accordingly informed the House frankly of what had happened; said that if it were in my power I would gladly throw out the Bill, but, as I was in a small minority, I should not divide. . . .

"This is a tremendous smash, and I fear must inevitably lead to a split between Cairns and me next year. For it is clear that we can only act on second readings now, and on those he will probably not go with me. The first cause of the defection is probably the panic of the Commons at impending election bills."

The report contained in this letter is practically a repetition of the concluding sentences of the speech which he had just delivered in the House of Lords when he wrote it. He had briefly recapitulated his objections to the Bill as it stood, and had then given a

frank but unreproachful account of the opposition which he had met with among his followers :

“ I found that the overwhelming majority of their Lordships were of opinion that, in the present state of affairs, especially those which have recently arisen in Ireland and in Egypt, it is not expedient that the Arrears Bill should be thrown out. I do not share in that opinion. If I had had the power I would have thrown out the Bill. I find myself, however, in a small minority, and therefore I shall not divide the House.” (*Hansard, August 10, 1882.*)

It would be difficult to find any defence for the conduct of the Conservative peers on this occasion, taken as a whole,—though that is by no means to beg the question as to which of the two contradictory positions they took up in the course of three weeks was, on its merits, the wiser. What we are here concerned with, for its characteristic quality, is the public proclamation of his defeat with which Lord Salisbury brought the incident to a close. It was quite unexpected, and was generally and strongly condemned at the time. When followers threaten desertion upon a question which is not of the first importance, two alternative surrenders are traditionally prescribed by the requirements of party unity. Their leader may induce them by private objurgation to continue along the chosen route in despite of their own wishes, or he may preserve his relative position towards them by overtaking their rerecord movement. Lord Salisbury did neither. He put no pressure : so far as can be seen in the accounts of the Arlington Street meeting he did not even remind his audience of the valiant protestations so recently made and so unblushingly recanted. But, on the other hand, he refused to be himself coerced into participating in their change of front. The indifference with which he thus made

public the disunion of his party and his own failure to control it appeared positively indecent in the eyes of parliamentary critics, and it was freely declared that he had gravely endangered, if not fatally destroyed, the success and permanence of his lead.

Things did not work out in that way. His influence in the House grew steadily stronger from this period, and he never again had to face any similar situation. One result of his candour which his critics failed to appreciate, and which was in fact undesigned —his letter to his wife shows how spontaneously, and in his own eyes inevitably, he acted—was to make his followers at least as anxious as himself to avoid a repetition of the experience. They could not in their hearts dispute his right to act in his own person in adherence to his published pledge, and his abstention from all comment or reproach made their responsibility for the resulting situation only more vividly apparent to their consciousness. The reply made by a sporting member of the recalcitrant majority, when asked how the speech had been received by his companions, need be suspected of no more than picturesque exaggeration : “ We sat silent,” he said glumly, “ looking like a pack of whipped hounds; and,” after a pause, “ that is what we felt like.”

This preference for asserting himself by independent action rather than by coercive pressure was not often displayed, because the occasion did not often arise. He was the reverse of autocratic, and both in his Cabinet and with his parliamentary followers he generally succeeded in achieving agreement beforehand by diplomatic means. But when a difference had to be insisted upon, the method which always attracted him was an announcement of the direction in which he proposed travelling, with a suggestion, implied or expressed, that those who differed from

him should follow their own path. The year before, when his cautious second-in-command had protested against some project of militant persistence (which in the event was never called for), he reported to his wife the advice which he had offered, with Lord Cairns' not surprising deprecation of it : " I told him that if he did not agree with me he should head a detachment into the other lobby,—but he observed that that would be very disagreeable."

Issue was rarely joined in such a precise fashion. But fugitive discontents were not infrequently met by some such intimation of independent purpose, accompanied by an unreserved recognition of the malcontents' right to a similar freedom. This attitude, in the very simplicity of its self-dependence, was realised as being immovable and was effectual in discouraging further remonstrance.

One protest which, through an accident, only reached him after the issue had been decided, would have caused him some embarrassment had he had to reply to it before the event. The Queen wrote him a letter under cover to Lady Salisbury, not knowing that the latter was out of England. In this, without entering upon the merits of the question, she appealed to him, for her sake, to avoid producing a collision between the Houses,—excusing her approach to him by a reminder of the assurances which he had given her when he left office that he would be ready at any time to place his personal service at her disposal.¹ He was able, as things were, to preface his reply by congratulating her upon the event, however adverse it might be to his own views of the public interest. His letter,² which was the first he addressed to her as a responsible political leader, was marked by the note of personal devotion and also of candour which charac-

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 320.

² *Ibid.* p. 327.

terised his long correspondence with her. He and his colleagues, he said, had no doubt decided upon their policy in ignorance of circumstances which might be present to Her Majesty's mind : he expressed deep regret that it had not met with her approval, and still more at his having been the means of causing her even temporary uneasiness. But he made no suggestion that, had he received the letter earlier, he would have acted differently. He went fully into all the circumstances and repeated the story much as it has been told here, stating the reason for his final persistence with a brief sufficiency which witnessed to his confidence in her comprehension : He had given a public pledge "which, of course, he had not felt at liberty to repudiate afterwards." He concluded by touching upon his grounds for believing that it would have been to the advantage of "both the Crown and the nation" if the crisis had in fact culminated, according to her fears, in a dissolution of Parliament.

This unrepentant apologia appears to have been found convincing. Two years afterwards, in a similar emergency, though of larger importance, she renewed her appeal for his assistance, but did not accompany it by a suggestion of surrender.

CHAPTER III

1883

OUTSIDE PARLIAMENT

THE stormy session of 1882 was followed by a period of salutary dulness in Parliament ; — representative of the brief pause which intervened between the subsidence of anarchy in Ireland and the onset of catastrophe in Egypt. Politicians in both camps claimed credit for the restoration of Irish order, though it was primarily an administrative victory. The new Act assisted in the work by freeing executive action from hampering restrictions, but it was the vigorous efficiency which the police organisation attained under Lord Spencer's Vice-Royalty that was the immediate agent in the improvement. Within a year of the crime's commission the Phoenix Park murderers were identified and convicted, and the achievement did not stand alone. Outrages could no longer count upon impunity, and steadily diminished in number and audacity. The Liberal Lord-Lieutenant and the men working under him had justified Lord Salisbury's rejection of the political plea of "impossibility." Under varying political direction this force remained an effectual weapon against the criminal element in Irish unrest until it was scrapped by its employers twenty-five years later.

This interval of comparative political peace was fitly inaugurated for Lord Salisbury by a family

function on a large scale at Hatfield. His eldest son came of age in October '82, and the event was celebrated according to traditional usage. All who were concerned, however remotely, with the estate, from the Hatfield school children and labourers to the gentry throughout Hertfordshire, were entertained at a series of festivities which continued for a week or ten days. Lord Salisbury remained conscientiously on duty, but, except for presiding and speaking at the central function of the tenants' dinner, his participation in the gaieties was of a passive order. A distinctive gentleness characterised his address in all social relations. The Rev. L. G. Mylne,¹ who soon after his ordination took holiday duty for a few weeks as chaplain at Hatfield, described the contrasting impression left upon him by the manner of his host and hostess respectively as that of "sweetness and light." But the genial expansiveness which is generally associated with the country gentleman at home did not come naturally to Lord Salisbury and he made no attempt to simulate it: the finely polished if rather impersonal courtesy with which he greeted his London guests served also to welcome his country neighbours of all classes and degrees. The only direction in which the squire asserted itself on such occasions was in his anxiety lest the household authorities should not have arranged for sufficient supplies. The possibility of his guests being stinted in either food or drink was a catastrophe the mere risk of which he refused to contemplate, and housewifely suggestions for moderation impelled him only to a more distrustful insistence on larger margins of provision.

Just before these celebrations began, the Warden of Keble College, the Rev. E. S. Talbot,² wrote to ask

¹ Afterwards Bishop of Bombay.

² Afterwards Vicar of Leeds and Bishop of Southwark and Winchester.

him whether he would preside at a meeting for the promotion of a memorial to Dr. Pusey, who had died that year, and allow it to be held at his house in London. It was proposed to found an institute at Oxford which should serve as a centre for the study and defence of Christian doctrine. In his reply Lord Salisbury, while consenting to the request and expressing his entire approval of the scheme, urged that minor differences should as far as possible be ignored at the meeting and that no stress should be laid upon those Church views with which Dr. Pusey's name was peculiarly associated.

To the Rev. E. S. Talbot, October 18, 1882.

“ Our object is to increase and heighten religious learning; the enemy whose working we seek to counteract are the deniers of the Christian religion. It is important that so far as any language used at the meeting is of a controversial character, it should be directed to no narrower controversy.

“ I am writing in haste, but I say this because I think the object we have in view will fail if our efforts appear to the public to be directed towards controversies internal to the Church of England.”

The Warden was sympathetic but appears to have entered a caveat against a possible assumption that the controversies in question were in themselves unimportant, and Lord Salisbury, in writing after the meeting to congratulate him upon its tone and conduct, explained further :

To the Rev. E. S. Talbot, November 22, 1882.

“ I quite accept your view that for the defence of the faith the full teaching of the faith, including that part of it which concerns Sacraments, is necessary. But the exceptional prominence into which the

doctrine of the Sacraments was thrust was a transitory condition—due to equally transient errors. They will not permanently occupy so large a portion of the Christian field of view; they would be out of perspective if they did so and would deform the symmetry of Christian teaching. How little is said now in any part of the Church about the twofold Nature, or the single Personality! Yet they once excited men's passions more fiercely than Baptismal Regeneration or the Real Presence.

"It was in that sense that I meant that Pusey's work as an apologist would survive his contributions to the polemics of the day."

Some months of the following winter were spent abroad for the health of the youngest son of the family, which was at this time a source of constant anxiety to his parents. A villa was taken at Valescure, a suburb of St. Raphael's among the Esterel Hills. Lady John Manners resumed her task of reporting home gossip to Lord Salisbury during his stay abroad. She was distinguished among his female acquaintance for her success in engaging him in correspondence, and his letters to her during this decade are the only ones of a purely social character that survive. To judge from the apologies for sins of delay or omission with which most of them open, he was not an easy subject for the enterprise. Nor does their substance induce great regret that it was not more often attempted. There were characteristic passages in them but, as a whole, they show not only less concentration of thought, but less sparkle than his official letters to colleagues and ambassadors. In this Valescure correspondence one may note one passage for the rather unexpected explanation which it offers of an attitude often met with among Englishmen who have served abroad. Lady John had reported the fanatical

championship with which a consular official, resident in Turkey, had spoken of the Turks : " It is very curious," comments Lord Salisbury, " how entirely Eastern minds subjugate a Western mind when they establish any hold over it. I have seen more than one case of Indian resident who has become the mere creature and instrument of the prince he is sent to control " (*December 28, 1882*). But for the most part, like the humblest of polite letter writers, he relied for filling his pages upon criticisms of the weather and complaints of his lack of matter.

Though parliamentary debating had slackened, the thirst of the electorate for platform oratory had still to be ministered to. Lord Salisbury's speeches in the country rather gained in quality by the change of atmosphere. They were less pervaded by the spirit of debate ; there was more room for digression into generalisations ; his attacks upon his opponents, though as vigorous as ever, were more broadly inspired and were not limited by concentration on passing incidents.

His success as a popular speaker had now passed beyond dispute and was witnessed to by the massed audiences that crowded to listen to him in every centre of industry which he visited. Its cause was not superficially apparent, for he was deficient in many of the qualities usually associated with the character. No one could claim for him that gift for establishing independent individual touch with an audience which is usually spoken of as " personal magnetism." It would, indeed, have been incongruous in a speaker

who, except under compulsion of grammar, had no use for the first person singular. Emotion was not prominent in his speeches. It was there, and even passion at times, but they were left to speak for themselves and were rarely elaborated in appeal to the feelings or imagination of others. Sentimental bye-issues were rigidly excluded, and so was the whole chapter of appeals to a superior moral standard. Some contributory advantages he owned. His capacity for hard hitting was no doubt welcome to British militancy. The crispness of his style, his gift for lucid statement, served to gain and hold the attention of minds unexercised in elaborate vocabularies ; the directness of his approach ; his claim to come to close quarters with facts ; the impression of solidity induced by his independence of other men's opinions,—were all qualities to attract unsophisticated audiences, suspicious of subtleties, seeking some secure moral anchorage for their own inarticulate uncertainties. But there was one characteristic which was fundamental in him and which offers the most satisfactory explanation of his success. It can best be described as an innate fidelity to type as an Englishman ;—an unconscious participation in the mentality, the sympathies, the points-of-view,—it may be the prejudices —which were his common inheritance with the race of men whom he was addressing.

Apart from subjects of administrative controversy, abroad or in Ireland, he based the claim of the Conservative party to working-class support primarily upon its championship of unity and economic security, though also from time to time throwing down a challenge in the name of liberty to the tyranny of Liberal philanthropists. The text from which he most frequently spoke was the moral evil as well as the economic fallacy of the “new Radicalism” of

which Mr. Chamberlain within the Cabinet and Sir Charles Dilke outside were then the most prominent, though not the most advanced exponents. It was social rather than political in its objective, mainly addressed to the age-long discontent of the “have-nots” and, in its inspiration if not in its actual proposals, occupied much the same position as that of the present-day Labour Party.

“The Radical party has come to the front, a party whose power feeds and depends upon the existence of discontent. And as their power feeds upon the existence of discontent, so they are not only quick to find it out, but eager to encourage and to promote it when it does appear. If they find anywhere a crack that is tending to divide two classes in the community, they hasten to drive in the wedge and to split it into a chasm. . . . Of course I have no doubt that they will tell you that their mission is to hear of grievances and to obtain their redress. Yes! but a party whose mission it is to live entirely upon the discovery of grievances are apt to manufacture the element upon which they subsist.”

He refused to admit the claim that such tactics were justified in the interests of the poor.

“It is right to be forward in the defence of the poor; no system that is not just as between rich and poor can hope to survive.”

But it was not the rich who would ultimately suffer the most from attacks on property; it was the poor, whose greatest interest lay in the security that is bred of confidence.

“Depend upon it, in the long run it is the class which lives by industry that will be the sufferer whenever Government departs from the right way.

“If the property of the rich could be divided among

the poor, how little value would it be to each individual workman or shopkeeper in this great country. What is of all things important to them is that capital should flow, that employment should exist, that wages should fertilise the channels of commerce. . . . In order that capital may flow, that employment may exist, enterprise must be free and enterprise must be secure."

In this connection he maintained that the luxurious expenditure of certain members of the richer class, which bulked so largely in Radical philippics, was as much a system of insecurity as of superfluity. There would always be plenty of people willing to spend money on themselves instead of saving it for investment, and in precise proportion to the discouragement offered to capital to venture itself freely, that tendency would gain strength. He adduced experience in Asiatic countries as an example of this law. There, where capital was at the mercy of a corrupt despotism and notoriously insecure, the total absence of enterprise and investment, with its result in extreme poverty among the people, was seen side by side with that extravagant personal expenditure which had made oriental luxury proverbial.

"Men who possess capital hasten to enjoy it because they know that they cannot trust their Government." (*Edinburgh, November 24, 1882.*)

The speech from which these quotations are made was one of a series delivered at a great Conservative demonstration in Edinburgh. In another, addressed the following day to a non-party audience, there was a reasoned indictment of the growing evil of centralisation. It was due, he declared, to no fault in either political party. It arose from the automatic action of the permanent officials under whose advice Bills were

drawn up. They were not immune from a failing, ubiquitous in humanity, of believing that if a question had to be decided they were the best persons to decide it. The result of the constant pressure of this influence was that each measure that was passed tended, however slightly, to increase the power of the centre and diminish that of the locality. Two evils resulted. In the first place the work was not so well done :

“ It is done more scientifically at first, no doubt, but it is done in formulae. Your case must fit formula A or formula B or formula C : if it does not, so much the worse for you. There is no elasticity. You are handed over to the great modern dictator—the inspector—an image made of wood and clothed with red tape, who has been set up by this generation in a temple.”

The second and worst evil was the loss of an essential element in the education of public opinion.

“ Unless men are trained by some work touching the government of their fellow-men,—in no matter how humble a fashion—they are likely to be swayed by every theory that may be offered, and public opinion becomes worthless. They are of no use to control those who are over them, they are of no use as a tribunal of final appeal. We live in an age when the world is full of wild teachers and our only security that the calm common-sense view of extravagant theories shall be taken is that the people shall be practised in their daily life in the government of their fellow-men.” (*November 25, 1882.*)

The passage is typical. Democracy as an accomplished fact had been accepted without reserve. He was now looking to its fuller and more intelligent realisation for support against the constant enemy—the doctrinaire theorist who, in his eyes, remained

through all changes of conditions the pre-eminent and permanent foe of a sane social and political system.

The new Radical propaganda was as antipathetic to the spirit of mid-Victorian Liberalism as it was to Conservative principles, and the failure of the existing party formation to represent the actual division of opinion became daily more apparent. Mr. Chamberlain was this year increasingly outspoken in the championship of his own views as distinct from those of the Cabinet as a whole. That summer he was talking of the "so-called rights of property" and hinting that his own ministerial majority was unduly under propertied influence. Lord Salisbury, speaking in St. James's Hall in June '83, commented upon the support of silence which his more moderate colleagues were giving to views of which they notoriously disapproved. In one of those passages of detached reasoning, which were characteristic of his polemic, he insisted that the injury thus inflicted upon the cause of good government was wider and deeper than that offered to merely party interests.

"In all countries there are men of extreme Conservative opinions and extreme Radical opinions, and between the two there is a large intermediate body of many different shades who, according to the exigencies of the time and as they see that the extremists on the one side or the other are likely to become predominant, lean to the deficient side with irresistible force and redress the balance that is wanting to save the equilibrium of the Constitution. That is the function which the vast mass of politicians in this country have to fulfil. But there is one exception—how numerous I know not, but they are highly inconvenient—who do not follow this law, who do not change their political action in accordance with their political convictions, but who prefer the uniform and colour before the substance of their creed." (*June 27, 1883.*)

The patent and increasing contradiction of opinion within the enemy's ranks made an evident call upon Conservative speakers to invite secession. Lord Salisbury was not deaf to it. Again and again, sometimes in passages of sarcasm and denunciation, sometimes in those of argument or appeal, he returned to the task of stimulating Whig uneasiness. But one feature which is usually prominent under such circumstances was markedly absent. In none of his speeches is there any suggestion of terms of compromise to be offered to the hoped-for recruits. Radicalism was the common enemy ; he challenged their consciences to deny the fact, and then without a note of hesitation he proclaimed his own creed as the only alternative. In so far as these tactics were deliberate and not temperamental, he would have maintained that in an appeal addressed, not to parliamentarians but to the constituencies, any hint of dubiety in Conservative policy would have weakened that assurance of solidity upon which he relied for converts among the alarmed followers of the older Liberalism.

His speeches were confident. But there were times when his personal anticipations were the reverse. In such a mood he composed the last of his "Quarterly" articles. It was called "Disintegration," and was published in the October number of the *Review* of this year of 1883.

He had written one other, in the spring of '81, since his return to opposition. But the fatigue of brain and body from which he was then suffering, though it does not appear to have greatly affected his speeches,

had so deteriorated his powers of writing that the article passed quite unnoticed. The present one, though perhaps not to be reckoned among his best work, was unmistakably his own and was instantly recognised. Manners had changed in the ten years which had intervened since his last publication and the article was commented on openly as his work both in newspapers and on the platform. He was astonished and indignant; always refused to acknowledge the authorship in public, and declared privately that, since his anonymity could no longer be secured, he would never again write in the *Review*,—a decision to which he adhered.

His annoyance was more comprehensible than his surprise. The article was scarcely one to which in his present position he would have been justified in affixing his signature. The anonymous utterances of a political philosopher are concerned only with the truth as he sees it, but a leader is bound not to dwell upon evils for which he cannot simultaneously prescribe remedies. “Disintegration,” as it stood, hardly complied with that condition. Its theme is summarised in one of the earlier paragraphs.

“There is a general disposition among those who in the constituencies are opposing the party now in power, to substitute the word Constitutional for the word Conservative in their political language. It is the fruit of a true instinct. The object of our party is not, and ought not to be, simply to keep things as they are. In the first place the enterprise is impossible. In the next place there is much in our present mode of thought and action which it is highly undesirable to conserve. What we require is the administration of public affairs, whether in the executive or the legislative department, in that spirit of the old constitution which held the nation together as a whole, and levelled its united force at objects of national import, instead

of splitting it into a bundle of unfriendly and distrustful fragments.

“The dangers we have to fear may roughly be summed up in the single word—disintegration. It is the end to which we are being driven, alike by the defective working of our political machinery, and by the public temper of the time. It menaces us in the most subtle and in the most glaring forms—in the loss of large branches and limbs of our Empire, and in the slow estrangement of the classes which make up the nation to whom the Empire belongs.”

He only touched upon the danger as it operated externally, devoting himself almost exclusively to its influence on home politics. He discussed the constitutional conditions which gave the evil its opportunity. Foremost among these was the incapacity of the supreme organ of power, the House of Commons, for the task of impartial arbitration between competitive interests, which he argued to be of the essence of civilised, as distinguished from semi-barbarous government.

“The movement of society is reversed; we are going back to the ancient method of deciding quarrels. Our ruler is no longer an impartial judge between classes who bring their differences before him for adjustment; our ruler is an Assembly which is itself the very field of battle on which the contending classes fight out their feuds. The settlement by arbitration has given place again to the settlement by civil war; only it is civil war with gloves on.”

The evil was aggravated by the system of sectional bargaining upon which Liberal Ministries were being more and more driven to depend for the preservation of their majority. The cool and deliberate judgment of the nation was an arbitrament which could be accepted. But, owing to this practice of trafficking for

the support of different organised interests, the action of the House of Commons did not even approximately represent it.

He spoke briefly of the forces which were making for disintegration within Great Britain itself. There was the equalitarian ideal which the modern Radical had set before himself, with its war declared against every superiority ; there was the assurance impressed upon the poorer classes by their leaders with regard to each issue as it arose, that the function of legislation was, in one form or another, to transfer to them something from the pockets of their more fortunate fellow-citizens. “ It is too much to hope that a doctrine which teaches that a disregard for the tenth Commandment is the highest duty of citizenship, should not gradually impress itself on the minds to which it is addressed.” These influences must tend ultimately to that long conflict between possession and non-possession which, when once it has a nation in its grip, is a disease bound to a fatal issue :

“ It kills slowly by disintegration. It eats out the common sentiments and mutual sympathies which combine classes into a patriotic State. The internal dissension becomes constantly more rancorous ; the common action and common aspirations become feebler. The organised body loses its defensive force against an external shock and falls under the power of the first assailant, foreign or domestic, by whom it may chance to be attacked after the final stage of political debility has set in.”

He was willing to hope that the country was still free from this disease. “ The real, living political forces of our people lie habitually so much in repose that an observer is always in danger of mistaking the professional polemic of politicians for conflicts really involving the great classes of which the nation is com-

posed.” But there was one part of the kingdom where the evil, though acting less directly than in economic politics, was already far advanced. He preludes the application of his thesis to Ireland by two or three pages of ironic comment upon the present position of the Whig leaders. The passage is too long for reproduction here but was largely quoted from at the time as constituting the most lively part of the article, and it contains phrases which, as specimens of his satire, are as incisive and more polished than those in which he denounced Disraeli sixteen years before.

There follows an enquiry into the cause of England’s humiliating failure in Ireland. He discards as unconvincing and incompatible with the experience of other countries the assumption usually made that it was due exclusively to her historical delinquencies :

“ Other countries have conquered dependencies in their time ; it is not an exceptional atrocity peculiar to the history of England. In other places the process has not been accomplished with rose-water ; but nevertheless the issue has been complete assimilation of the conquerors and conquered and the creation of a united people. There is much in the past history of Ireland that would be horrible if it took place at the present day, but there is nothing in it monstrous or singular—nothing worse than has been done elsewhere by invaders in a conquered province—nothing that was out of harmony with the morality of the age in which it took place.”

In fact, throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century there had been no trouble of the kind to which we were now accustomed. During the critical moments of the Jacobite rebellions, Ireland had remained quiescent, neither seeking nor finding her opportunity in England’s necessity. The emergence of the problem as we knew it was, in fact, coincident

with the first essays of Liberalism, then represented by the old Whigs, in the policy of placating revolt by unconvincing concessions. The century which had elapsed since 1780 stood out from all other periods in Irish history, doubly characterised.

“ The internal history of Ireland during this last hundred years has been a continuous tempest of agitation, broken by occasional flashes of insurrection. The legislation of the period has been a continuous stream of concession. And by these words we do not mean merely that the views of the Legislature changed; and that, having previously pursued one particular policy, they afterwards pursued its opposite. Concession implies two processes ; it means refusal changed into consent by pressure. The poet’s description of Julia, who, ‘vowing she would ne’er consent, consented,’ would serve for a description of Britannia’s attitude to Ireland ever since the appearance of Lord Charlemont and the volunteers. The consequence has been that condition of feeling which enables Mr. Healy, without obvious absurdity, to assert that ‘ninetenths of the Irish people hate us and the other tenth despises us.’ ”

He discusses the situation which had arisen from these distorted relations. Assisted by the opportunity offered by democratic institutions, the disaffected community was now striving to compel submission to its demand for separation. Mr. Parnell had supplemented the older plan of bargaining the Irish vote by that of paralysing the parliamentary machine, and this policy of intimidation was being reinforced by the agrarian conspiracy which was still at work. Its authors might find their task more arduous than they expected. They were probably proceeding on the assumption that there was no limit to the compressibility of a Liberal Government : “ It must be admitted that, up to this time, the existence of such a

limit is a matter of faith rather than of experience. But whether the English people will be equally compressible, when once they understand the question, remains to be seen." The separatist demand would persist. Hopes based upon the curative properties of a free constitution were delusive. When once a community had ceased to be homogeneous in its aims, representative institutions only perpetuated discontent. "The more the party that in an Irish parliament would be dominant have recognised their isolated condition as a permanent minority in the assembly at Westminster, the stronger has their wish to escape from Westminster become." The only visible issue lay in "a courageous maintenance of the rights of the Empire and a patient struggle with the resistance, however stubborn it may be, however long it may last, against which those rights must be vindicated."

Then, driven onward, in spite of himself as it would almost appear, by the logic which had excluded all more facile alternatives to the acceptance of Home Rule, he concludes the article with a passionately eloquent and, to his immediate readers, most unnecessary outburst against that solution. It was at that time almost universally looked upon as outside the field of practical politics. No party, no substantial group of British politicians even, had as yet consented to consider it. This passage was probably largely responsible for the condemnation urged against the article by Conservative writers in the press, for exhibiting "an alarmist tone unbecoming in a statesman."

"One issue there is which, in the judgment not only of the Conservative party, but in that of the great majority of Englishmen, is absolutely closed. The highest interests of the Empire, as well as the most sacred obligations of honour, forbid us to solve this question by conceding any species of independence to

Ireland ; or in other words, any licence to the majority in that country to govern the rest of Irishmen as they please. To the minority, to those who have trusted us and on the faith of our protection have done our work, it would be a sentence of exile or of ruin. All that is Protestant—nay, all that is loyal—all who have land or money to lose, all by whose enterprise and capital industry and commerce are still sustained, would be at the mercy of the adventurers who have led the Land League, if not of the darker counsellors by whom the Invincibles¹ have been inspired. If we have failed after centuries of effort to make Ireland peaceable and civilised, we have no moral right to abandon our post and leave all the penalty of our failure to those whom we have persuaded to trust in our power. It would be an act of political bankruptcy, an avowal that we were unable to satisfy even the most sacred obligations, and that all claims to protect or govern anyone beyond our own narrow island were at an end.

“ In the presence of such considerations we hardly care to speak of the strategical objections. But these are formidable enough. If Ireland is not with us she is against us. If her Government does not obey the orders given from Westminster it will speedily become subordinate to the greater Ireland that is growing up beyond the ocean. Napoleon was wont to say that Antwerp was a loaded pistol held to the mouth of the Thames. The coast of Ireland, in unfriendly hands, would be something more than a pistol held to the mouths of the Clyde and the Mersey and the Severn. And we must not dismiss such extreme conditions from our minds as possibilities which cannot be realised. We shall have speedily enough to choose between them and the reconquest of Ireland if once Home Rule be granted. Any political power conceded to an Irish assembly will be made the fulcrum by which more will be exacted, until complete practical independence is secured.”

¹ The secret society by which the Phoenix Park murders had been planned.

Even while he wrote these words he seems to have realised and felt the force of the criticism to which they would be liable. He admits in the next sentence that the impossibility of England's acceding to Home Rule was too plain to need enforcing ; a confidence which within the next three years was to be unexpectedly put to the test and justified. But a more difficult task than the deliverance of a simple negative lay before the nation.

" It must guard itself from being led, under the guise of legitimate indulgences or of carrying out accepted principles, into concessions which will make Home Rule inevitable. Have we strength left to do this ? or has the disintegration gone so far that these concessions too will be won by the process which has proved effective for all that have gone before ? We may have the resolution to refuse Home Rule as a whole. Have we the resolution to refuse it in instalments ? Or will our bargaining politicians when votes grow scarce, open their market once more for a final clearance sale of all that remains of English rule in Ireland ? "

In November his pen was less contentiously occupied. A missionary investigator had published a pamphlet—"The Bitter Cry of Outcast London"—in which was described, in language whose strength was justified by the facts revealed, the appallingly crowded and unhealthy state of London tenement houses and the misery and vice which flowed from it. Lord Salisbury had always felt strongly on this question, so when he was asked to contribute a signed article to the recently started *National Review*, he selected for his theme "Labourers' and Artisans' Dwellings." He argued both the urgency of the problem and its difficulty, and maintained the right and duty of the State to take action. Through the

machinery of private Bill legislation and for the construction of public works, it had more than once exercised its powers for the purpose of sweeping away working-class dwellings by the thousand. It was not tolerable that the principle of *laissez-faire* should be suspended only to the detriment of the poor. As one expedient which might prove effective, he suggested, with special reference to the scheme initiated about this time by Miss Octavia Hill, that loans on easy terms might be granted to private agencies who should be willing to embark upon the task of construction or improvement. But he declared that the first necessity was to ascertain the facts and figures officially.

He did not let the matter drop. When Parliament met for the session of 1884, he moved the appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into the whole subject. The question which most patently required solution, he said, was why existing laws, which appeared on the face of things adequate, had failed of their purpose. He touched upon the expense incurred in large clearances of slum districts and made caustic comment upon the proposal to meet it by levying a special rate from ground landlords. The outcome would be utterly inadequate for the purpose ; advocates of the proposal should have the courage of their opinions and boldly announce a policy of wholesale confiscation. "There is no use in incurring all those penalties which an unfailing Nemesis inflicts upon the authors of public plunder unless they get a sufficient amount of booty to indemnify them for the operation." Ground landlords were, in fact, not responsible for the conditions. That he did not equally exonerate the immediate letters of unhealthy houses was apparent. "I do not say, I will not say, that there are not persons to blame." But he refused to delay the prospect of

effectual remedy by being drawn into a discussion of that question. "It is wholly futile to try and escape from the urgency of the problem by throwing blame on any class of men."

The fundamental cause of mischief was the lack of houses rather than their defectiveness ; so long as that continued, any law involving the closing of houses was too cruel in its effect to be put into operation. It was here that enquiry was supremely needful—to determine what building was required and where and by whom it should be provided. His article had made him suspect to the more rigid school of economists. Lord Wemyss, the champion of individualism in the House of Lords, had spoken words of warning as to whither his views might lead him, and at the close of this speech he replied to the criticism :

"I will at once say I do not favour any wild schemes of State interference. I am as earnest as any man in this House that, while we approach great public evils and desire to remedy them, we should scrupulously observe that honesty which is the condition of continued and abiding prosperity for the industries of this country. But, while I will maintain that doctrine as earnestly as my noble friend, yet I would ask the House to avoid that kind of political cowardice which declines to consider and examine a problem lest its urgency should afterwards seem to be a temptation to provide illegitimate methods for its remedy. The evils that we have to deal with are very serious. . . .

"After all, whatever political arrangements we may adopt, whatever the political constitution of our State may be, the foundation of all its prosperity and welfare must be that the mass of the people shall be honest and manly, and shall have common sense. How are you to expect that these conditions will exist among people subjected to the frightful influences which the present over-crowding of our poor produces ?

. . . I hope Parliament will never transgress the laws of public honesty, but I equally hope that Parliament will not be deterred by fear of being tempted to transgress those laws, or still more by the fear of being accused of intending to transgress those laws, from fearlessly facing and examining and attempting to fathom these appalling problems which involve the deepest moral, material, and spiritual interests of the vast mass of our fellow-countrymen." (*Hansard*, February 22, 1884.)

A Commission was appointed of distinguished composition. Sir Charles Dilke, as President of the Local Government Board, was in the chair, and among the members, besides Lord Salisbury, were the Prince of Wales, Cardinal Manning, Mr. Goschen, Mr. Broadhurst, and Mr. Jesse Collings. Before it reported, which was in fifteen months' time, things happened in the political world, and it was as Prime Minister that, in July 1885, Lord Salisbury introduced to Parliament a measure embodying its main recommendations. It was understood to have been drawn up by Sir Charles Dilke and himself in collaboration. It was not a large Bill, and in most of its provisions has been overtaken or cancelled by later legislation. Treasury loans on the security of the rates, which were already available for urban authorities, were now offered to country districts as well; the interest to be charged on them was substantially lowered; the Local Government Board was empowered, on the report of a sanitary inspector, to compel dilatory Local Authorities to the closing of unhealthy houses; the landlords of such were made personally liable for any damage to life or health which could be shown to have been caused by their condition. This last proposal excited a flutter of alarm, especially among certain speculative building societies, and it was no doubt with some

malicious amusement that Sir Charles Dilke, in debate, referred casually to its having been initiated by the Conservative chief. He was also, as he admitted later, personally responsible for the only provision of the Bill that caused any excitement in Parliament. He defended it specifically in a Memorandum by which he accompanied the Commission's report. The Home Office had expressed a wish to abandon three of its large London prisons, Millbank, Pentonville, and Coldbath Fields. A clause in the Bill instructed the Treasury to sell their sites to the Metropolitan Board of Works at such a price as would make them suitable for the erection of working-class houses. This would have secured some forty acres for artisans' dwellings within easy reach of their work. As the sites, however, were valuable for other purposes, a considerable sacrifice of taxpayers' money would have been involved for the benefit of these prospective tenants. Mr. Goschen refused to sign the recommendation of the Commission in favour of this proposal, and it roused Liberal economists in the House of Commons to extreme indignation. The Conservative Government were holding office in a minority until the approaching general election, and had pledged themselves against the introduction of contentious business in the interval, so there was nothing for it but to agree to an amendment securing for the Treasury a "fair market price" for the prison sites,—which made the clause inoperative.

This episode was referred to in the House of Lords by Lord Wemyss in the course of a speech lamenting the socialistic tendency of legislation during the last fifteen years. He accused Lord Salisbury of having betrayed Conservative principles in such a departure from orthodox political economy. Lord Salisbury repudiated the connection of ideas. Lord Wemyss had quoted an eloquent passage from Lord Macaulay

in exposition of the individualist creed : “ I am not a follower of Lord Macaulay,” retorted the Conservative leader drily, and then recalled to his hearers that the passage in question was actually part of an attack upon the Tory views of the poet Southey. He took the opportunity to define his position as towards this controversy in general.

“ My complaint of the doctrine which the noble Earl preaches with so much eloquence in this House is that it is deformed throughout by a serious ambiguity of expression. The word “ Socialism ” in his hands has a great many different meanings. Usually he employs it simply as a synonym for robbery, as a term which means taking what belongs to one man and giving it to another. I need not say that, in so far as my noble friend uses it in that sense, I entirely concur with him in all his denunciations. . . . But then, that is not socialism in the sense in which my noble friend has applied the term to such a measure as the unfortunate one of mine, which he is so fond of criticising, or many other proposals of the present day. Socialism in that sense is the application of the power and resources of society to benefit, not the whole of society, but one particular class, especially the most needy class of that society ; and the main commandment of the gospel preached by my noble friend is : ‘ Thou shalt not use the public resources to benefit the poor.’ ”

Whether that doctrine were right or not, or in whatever sense it were right, this country was excluded from its adoption by the existence of the Poor Law, which had for three centuries formed the basis of its system in dealing with social questions. Since in the end the State had admitted itself bound to the whole support of the necessitous poor, it could not be argued on the grounds of economic principle that it was debarred from expenditure which aimed at diminishing

their number. But, he added, if Lord Wemyss "would but abandon what seemed to himself the very shabby and ragged ends of worn-out principles and go to higher considerations of policy and justice," he was quite ready to agree with him as to the dangers involved in any large extension of State assistance to sections of the community. Only it was of no use attempting to dispose of any particular proposal by simply ticketing it as socialistic.

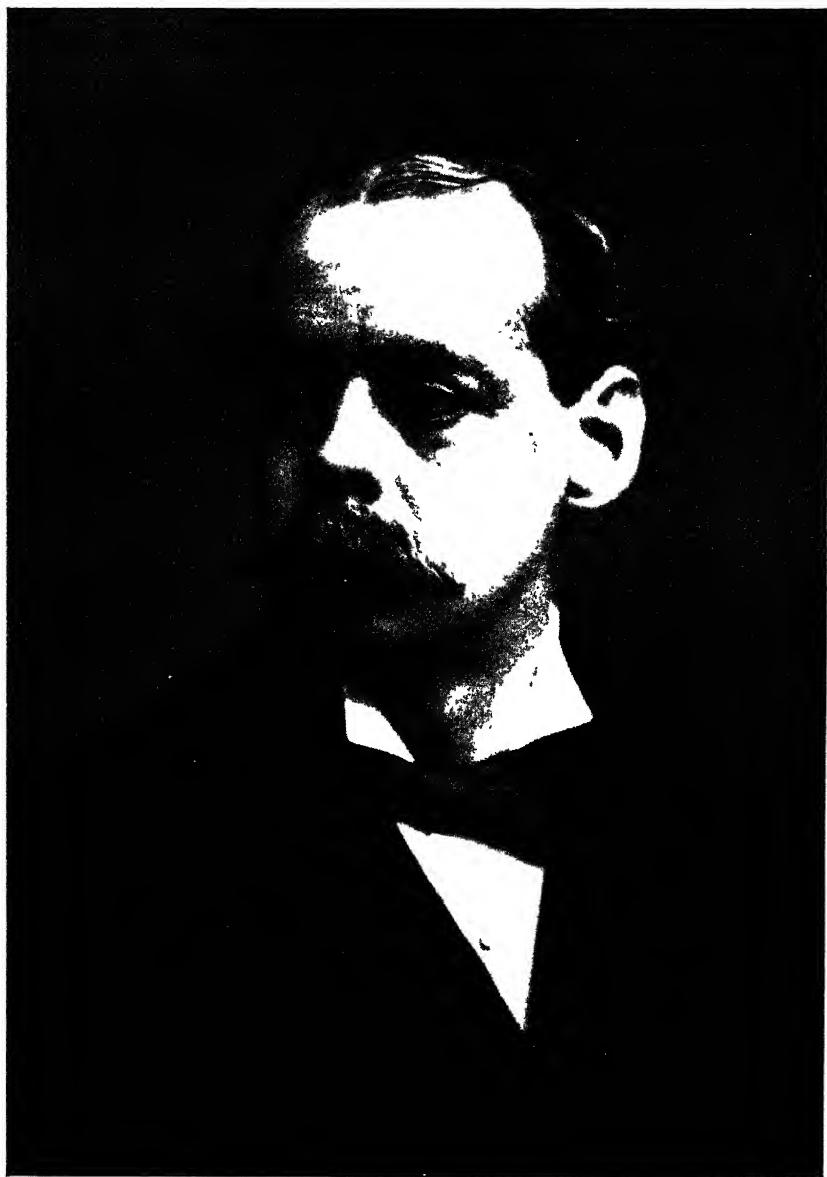
"Prove that it is against public policy : shew that it discourages thrift : above all, shew that it interferes with justice ; that it benefits one class by injuring another—do these things and you have proved your case. But do not imagine that by merely affixing to it the reproach of socialism you can seriously affect the progress of any great legislative movement, or destroy those high arguments which are derived from the noblest principles of philanthropy and religion."

(*Hansard, July 31, 1885.*)

Party dissensions at this period were not confined to the ministerial ranks, though in those of the Opposition they bore a more personal and fugitive character. As an episode in Lord Salisbury's leadership the controversy between the Tory leaders and the National Union of Conservative Associations which disturbed the wire-pulling elements of the party during the winter and spring of 1883–84 cannot be ignored here, though it has already been dealt with at length in Mr. Winston Churchill's Life of his father.

Lord Randolph Churchill's revolt against his Commons front bench had from the first met with more sympathy in the constituencies than in the

House itself. Ardent provincial Tories were irritably conscious of Sir Stafford Northcote's constitutional incapacity for the indignation which filled their own souls, and they were not daily witnesses, as members were, of the discretion and imperturbable suavity with which he conducted the normal business of parliamentary opposition. They read Lord Randolph's remorseless invective against Ministers with a feeling of gratitude somewhat akin to that which, in the familiar anecdote, the Bishop expressed for the "damn" of his fellow-victim under an avalanche of hot soup. They were seconded in their appreciation by a less simply inspired body of opinion. Throughout the eighties and nineties Conservative leaders were at recurrent intervals assailed by certain members of their party with exhortations to espouse the cause of Tory Democracy,—which was never precisely defined. With the majority of its supporters the inspiring motive was tactical rather than political. It was not the creed of Conservatism that they doubted, but its power of appeal to the electorate. The cry slackened almost to silence after victory, swelled recurrently after defeat, and was never louder than in the years which immediately followed the disaster of 1880. In every constituency there was a number of restlessly disappointed workers whose coveting of the catch-words which had served their opponents so victoriously as war-cries expressed itself in clamant aspirations after a "democratic programme." This section of opinion, of rather nebulous outline and—as Lord Randolph was to discover later to his loss—most unstable foundations, was of necessity largely represented among those delegates of the workers who formed the National Union of Conservative Associations. Its Council had recently elected Lord Randolph as chairman, and he decided to secure alike the



LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

From a photograph by Russell & Sons.

1886

triumph of the Tory Democratic "cause" and his own authority in the party by making it supreme over the latter's actual electioneering organisation.

The party machine was at that time under the management of a Committee of members of Parliament, nominated by the leaders and working under their direction, who were known as the Central Committee. The arrangement was not a good one. The unlucky group of amateurs, who could neither lay claim to the respect due to leaders nor the toleration accorded to subordinate professional experts, became the target upon which all the local and personal discontents of a large organisation were concentrated. Lord Randolph and his friends proposed to abolish this Committee and replace it by the Council of the National Union.

The campaign was opened at the annual meeting of the Union in October 1883, when an innocuously vague resolution was placed before the delegates and adopted by them, requesting that their "legitimate influence in the party organisation" should be recognised. Lord Randolph sent it to Lord Salisbury only and, in his enclosing letter, altogether ignored the existence of his partner in the dual leadership, the House of Commons chief. This initiatory error in tactics was partly explained by accompanying messages indirectly conveyed to the Lords' leader, which showed an expectation of securing his support by a frankly hinted invitation to assert himself as sole leader of the party. Misjudgment of character could hardly have gone further. The mistake was taken full advantage of. There was no dramatic *nolo episcopari*. While taking counsel with Sir Stafford and being careful to word all his own communications as resting upon their united authority, Lord Salisbury kept the conduct of the dispute from this time onwards in his own hands. The mutineers were thus deprived of any

assistance which they might have received from provincial discontent with his colleague's pacificatory leadership.

After a few weeks' fencing on both sides the Council of the Union drew up a report demanding the transference to itself of the powers at present owned by the Central Committee. Lord Randolph preceded its presentation by a private letter in which, among other things, he announced his intention, if the report was not accepted, of transferring the quarrel to the constituencies and exerting all his platform influence to obtain their support in his leaders' despite. His chief ignored this menace and responded with an informal letter of warning, to be read to the Council, in which the note of authority was frankly sounded. He pointed out that the powers of the Central Committee were not in question, for the simple reason that they did not exist. The Committee acted only as agents of the leaders, and, so far as concerned those duties which had always attached to the leaders—the expenditure of the party funds, the direction of its policy, the approval of its candidates—these could in no case be delegated except to gentlemen whom he and Sir Stafford should select. Since he gathered that the Council's report would not harmonise with that requirement, he warned them that it would not be accepted.

It was nevertheless presented. Lord Salisbury acknowledged the presentation in a formal communication and prepared for action. The staff of the National Union had hitherto been accommodated in the party offices. It was now intimated to them that, since their organisation had decided to act independently of the leaders, they had better find offices of their own. Either by this "notice to quit" or the final rejection of his report, Lord Randolph was moved

to a sudden outburst of wrath. He sent a letter of passionate defiance, crudely worded, which was subsequently published in the newspapers. It was inevitably directed against Lord Salisbury personally. Lord Salisbury made no reply, and the National Union Council found themselves faced by the alternative of either withdrawing their claims or doing battle publicly,—not, as they had intended, with the anonymity of the Central Committee, but with the already dominating repute of the Lords' leader. Pressed by the attractive force of Lord Randolph's vehemence, they hesitated. But a short Easter recess brought counsel—and perhaps correspondence with their constituents—and at a meeting in the first week in May they passed, in opposition to their chairman, a resolution asking for terms of accommodation. Lord Randolph resigned his chairmanship and, so far as the National Union and its claims were concerned, the battle was over.

For three months longer there was much coming and going in the work of reconciliation. Its progress was assisted by the volunteered resignation of the Central Committee, whose members had long been anxious to escape from their invidious position. They were not replaced, and the central organisation of the party remained under the exclusive and direct control of the leaders acting only through the Whips and the staff of the office. Meanwhile Lord Randolph was induced to reconsider his resignation of the chairmanship, and friendly volunteers worked hard in mediating between him and Lord Salisbury. The principal one of these and the most effectual was Mr. Balfour. Throughout that spring and summer he laboured indefatigably with both parties,—reporting, analysing, commenting, explaining, expending himself in efforts to interpret between his friend and his uncle.

He was more successful with the latter than with the former. Lord Salisbury was quite conscious that success did not lie in the mere defeat of a man capable of doing so great service or injury to the common cause. Effective co-operation and, for that purpose, mutual understanding was the end to be aimed at. It was not an easy one to attain, for the two men had little temperamentally in common. More than once in the course of this controversy, Lord Salisbury had unwittingly excited ebullitions of anger so unexpected as to be in his eyes simply inexplicable. He wrote to Lady John Manners in May '84, when the trouble in the Soudan was at its height : " Randolph and the Mahdi have occupied my thoughts about equally. The Mahdi pretends to be half mad, and is very sane in reality ; Randolph occupies exactly the converse position." To another friend he complained that Randolph's temperament was essentially feminine— " and I have never been able to get on with women " —an unwarranted profession of incapacity.

But he accepted the challenge forced upon him by his experiences of this year and, assisted by the chart drawn out for him by his nephew, set deliberately to work to explore the unknown territory. From this time he took every opportunity to invite intercourse and encourage confidence ; was ready both with sympathy and counsel ; industriously intent upon learning and, when learnt, avoiding whatever might cause offence to his follower's sensitive nerves. The labour involved was considerable, since the younger man's demand for comprehension expressed itself in a wealth of correspondence which increased progressively as their connection grew closer. Success was limited. Lord Salisbury discovered points of natural contact. Lord Randolph's capacity for affection and gratitude for any sympathy offered, his loyalty to his

friends, and his fine generosity of temper touched him repeatedly. He achieved comprehension for practical purposes, but never any lasting influence or power of control. And the enlightenment, such as it was, was not mutual. In reading the accounts of their final breach in 1886–87, it is impossible not to feel that Lord Randolph understood as little of his chief's character then as he had done three years before during this dispute over the powers of the party machine.

CHAPTER IV

1884

THE SOUDAN

THE LORDS AND THE FRANCHISE BILL

IN spite of the storm of controversy over foreign affairs in which the elections of 1880 had taken place, the subject occupied a small place in public attention or Opposition oratory during the first years of the Liberal Government. Lord Salisbury confined himself to occasional criticisms on matters of detail or diplomatic method. Though in March 1881 he joined in the debate on the Government's surrender to the Boers after the battle of Majuba Hill, Lord Cairns' exhaustive denunciation left room for no more than an auxiliary contribution. He concentrated on the betrayal of England's loyal adherents, both black and white, who had been solemnly assured of permanent protection six weeks before their abandonment. "If it is immoral to assert our authority now, it was immoral in January" was his stern comment on the plea that "blood guiltiness" would have been incurred by a continuance of the struggle.

Egypt, to which public attention was first generally called by the bombardment of Alexandria in the summer of 1882, was destined to put an effectual end to this parliamentary truce over external policy. At the outset, party politics were but little affected by it.

The victory over Arabi Pasha and his army of mutinous soldiers at Tel-el-Kebir in September was generally popular, and was more so with the Tory rank and file than with that of the Ministerialists. Lord Salisbury, however, was from the first, personally critical of statesmanship which could only secure its ends by such violent methods. The conditions which led up to the military intervention were sufficiently like to those with which he himself had had to deal in 1879 to suggest comparison. On both occasions a mutiny of Egyptian officers against their own superiors had merged into a Nationalist movement against the foreigner, though in the earlier instance the reigning Khedive had first secretly inspired and finally led the insurrectionary attack, while in the later one he had been the authority against whom it was primarily directed. The developments of the two episodes were in striking contrast. The Khedive Ismail was in his own person a far more formidable opponent than Arabi Pasha ; but he had been given no opportunity for the display of his quality. The firman for his deposition was secured within a week of his proclamation of defiance, and his deportation to Europe had followed four days later. The movement which he had engineered collapsed without the employment or presence of a single foreign soldier or the shedding of a drop of blood. In '81-'82 Arabi's agitation was suffered to continue unchecked for fifteen months, and fructified in riot and anarchy whose ultimate results entailed the sacrifice of thousands of lives and had their reactions upon the whole of European history. The bombardment of Alexandria by the British fleet, with its necessary corollary of protective invasion, led through a sequence of unplanned catastrophes to the establishment by force of arms of that exclusive protectorate over Egypt which Prince Bismarck had

vainly urged as a diplomatic enterprise upon the caution of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury. Never was the opposition between intention and action more complete than when, within two years of the Mid-lothian crusade for peace, its preacher became involved in such a record of blood-stained adventure.

In a speech at Edinburgh in November 1882, Lord Salisbury, reasoning from his own experience, sought to identify some of the causes which had made the bombardment and invasion inevitable. One cause upon which he insisted was the failure in moral authority which had preceded and compelled this resort to brute force. Whenever a strong power was finally challenged by a weaker one civilised enough to realise the difference between them, it might generally be assumed, he declared, that there had been something in the conduct of the former to induce a belief that it would not exert its strength. This belief had been induced in Egypt by the British Government's action in other parts of the world and notably by the surrender in South Africa, which at that time was not yet twelve months old.

This speech was made before the diplomatic correspondence which had led up to the catastrophe had been published, and its publication exonerated the British Foreign Office from two further and more immediate charges of default which Lord Salisbury brought against it. He criticised Lord Granville for having omitted to placate Mussulman feeling by acting, as Lord Beaconsfield's Government had been careful to act in '79, through the Sultan as Caliph and Suzerain, and also for the procrastination which had replaced the swiftness of the earlier intervention. But, in fact, Lord Granville had done his best. He had accurately read the situation, and throughout the autumn and winter of '81 had urged recourse to Turkish

support: had pleaded incessantly, if a little indefinitely, with his French allies for promptitude in preventive action. On one vital distinction between the present position and that of three years earlier Lord Salisbury was decorously silent. Then, as now, the Egyptian Government had acted under the combined control of the two protecting Powers—France and England. But whereas in 1879 the advice tendered by them had throughout been initiated from, and decided in, Downing Street, in '81-'82 the position had been reversed. During those critical winter months when Arabi's movement was still incipient and manageable, France, under the leadership of M. Gambetta, had entirely dominated the decisions of the Dual Control.

M. Gambetta made no secret of his objective. He believed that a joint military occupation by the two Powers was the most positively desirable issue. It is permissible to assume that he was largely influenced to that belief by a consideration of France's military superiority and of the predominant position which she would thus achieve. Therefore he was in no hurry to restrain disorder or secure a peaceful solution. He stubbornly obstructed all Lord Granville's appeals, and the procrastination of which Lord Salisbury complained had not been fortuitous.

The sequel constitutes one of the most ironic chapters in history. In January, after the mischief had been done and Khedive Tewfik's authority reduced to nullity, M. Gambetta was turned out of office on some domestic question. He was succeeded by a minister obsessed by dread of his German neighbours and resolved at all hazards against military commitments out of Europe. Egypt was by that time rolling into the abyss, and when the crash came in the form of murderous riots in Alexandria and threats of Christian massacre throughout the country, no remedy

was left but England's unaccompanied intervention. The diplomacy which had been designed to secure France's domination in Egypt had achieved her final exclusion from it and the lasting enthronement there of her reluctant partner.

This in itself was not an issue for Lord Salisbury to lament. Four years before, reasoning from the political psychology of the two nations, he had foretold it as inevitable—though he had not anticipated its being reached along so bloody a path. But he now realised the risks involved both to Egypt and to the honour of England by this compelled and incongruous excursion of Liberalism into adventurous action. The danger was early signalled. The victory of Tel-el-Kebir had hardly been won before the Radical Ministerialists, not unnaturally dismayed at the form in which the promised millennium of peace had materialised, began to clamour for the instant repatriation of our soldiers and for this country's abstention from all further interference in Egyptian affairs. Speaking in the House of Lords on October 26, Lord Salisbury earnestly warned Ministers against the temptation thus pressed upon them. It was impossible, he said, for England to escape now from the responsibility of her acts. Her troops had done much more than suppress a revolt. They had dispersed the Egyptian army, and had thus destroyed the material sanction upon which the Khedive's authority rested ; they had restored him to his throne by their infidel arms, and had thus even more effectually destroyed its moral sanction. Lord Granville had described the policy of his Government as being directed to the upholding of the Khedive.

" You have not held up the Khedive," replied Lord Salisbury ; " you have picked up the Khedive. Nothing could be more widely opposed than those

two processes in their results." "Unless we are prepared," he went on, "to do the business over again or leave Egypt to an anarchy which is inconsistent with all our professions and fatal to our interests, he must be sustained by that which is the only thing left upright in that land,—namely, the power of Great Britain." (*Hansard, October 26, 1882.*)

It was a simple statement of fact. But the offence which had been offered to their creed seems at this time to have driven the devotees of non-intervention into a fanaticism which despised both fact and logic. The recent adventure must have no succession; therefore its material consequences must be ignored. The independence of Egypt was a fundamental postulate; therefore its manifest dependence must be denied. The capacity of reality for avenging contempt was now to be exhibited, swiftly and tragically.

At the time of the Tel-el-Kebir campaign the insurrection of the Mahdi—such a fanatical prophet as has more than once appeared among barbarous half-converts to Mahommedanism—had been but a vague portent dimly rumoured from the far-distant frontiers of the equatorial Soudan. But the long-standing oppression and corruption of Egyptian administration and its present bankruptcy in money and respect gave his revolt a peculiar opportunity. Early in 1883, before the organised machinery of government had been as much as re-started in Cairo, and whilst the British expeditionary force was still encamped there in absolute if unconfessed control, Englishmen on the spot realised the seriousness of the approaching danger. They reported in favour of an immediate withdrawal of the southernmost garrisons in the Soudan and the fixing of the line of defence at Khartoum, which was held by a large if demoralised body of Khedivial troops under the command of an English officer, Hicks

Pasha. Egyptian ministers took the other view and ordered Hicks Pasha to prepare for an advance into Kordofan against the oncoming horde of savages. The British Foreign Office refused to interfere and specifically forbade its agents to imperil its detachment or the proclaimed hypothesis of Egyptian independence by giving any advice on the subject to the Cairo Government. The force at Khartoum was notoriously deficient in every military value—discipline, morale, supply, equipment, money. Hicks Pasha telegraphed complaint of these defects to Sir Edward Malet, the British Consul-General at Cairo : the British Consul at Khartoum emphasised more directly the danger of the proposed expedition. Sir Edward, while given permission to transmit these messages to the Egyptian Ministers, was again instructed to abstain absolutely from any expression of opinion on their contents : “ Her Majesty’s Government could assume no responsibility for the conduct of affairs in the Soudan.”

So the expedition started, numbering some 6000. In November 1883, starving in a waterless desert, the force was surrounded and slaughtered almost to a man. The victors continued their advance, and the arrival of fugitives with news of the disaster was immediately followed by a message from Khartoum stating that that city, with its now miserably attenuated garrison, was in imminent danger. Meanwhile the contagion had spread to the Eastern Soudan, where Osman Digna, a lieutenant of the Mahdi’s, had already invested two forts, Sinkat and Tokar, near the coast of the Red Sea. Cairo, left helpless to its own devices by its British invaders, and having no soldiers to send, despatched a militarily worthless corps of Gendarmerie, under the command of Baker Pasha, to their assistance. It was defeated and des-

troyed in its first engagement, two-thirds of its number being killed, including several Englishmen who had accompanied the expedition.

Popular feeling was now rising in England, and under its pressure and assisted by who knows what subterranean processes of Cabinet controversy, the ministerial obsession of irresponsibility was abandoned. During the next few weeks the Government advanced by swift stages from pure detachment to advice, from advice to insistence, from insistence to action. The Khedive was induced, much against his will, to proclaim a renunciation of his sovereignty over the whole of the Soudan, and in February 1884, 4000 British troops under General Graham were despatched, pitifully too late, to the relief of the Red Sea forts. They arrived in time to hear that the garrison of Sinkat had been cut to pieces with the massacre of its non-combatant inhabitants,—men, women and children,—and that that of Tokar had surrendered. There was no further military object to be attained, and the climate made it impossible for the British soldiers to remain on the coast. They were nevertheless ordered to justify their expedition by attacking the Arabs. They did so, and, with no practical purpose to serve, duly killed some thousands of them before re-embarking for the Mediterranean. This episode was a bye-issue without results, but Lord Salisbury always referred to it with peculiar indignation.

To meet the emergency at Khartoum another expedient had been adopted more in accordance with the peaceable traditions of Liberalism. Early in December the *Pall Mall Gazette* had suggested that General Gordon should be sent unaccompanied to Khartoum to advise upon and accomplish the extrication of its garrison by the exercise of his personal influence. He had acted for some years as Governor-General of

the Soudan under Ismail, and it was known that his saintliness, his fearlessness, and his minor eccentricities of conduct and manner had at that time combined to give him a great authority over its people. This was basis enough for a newspaper appeal to idealistic sentiment and the proposal was warmly taken up by the press at large. In the first days of the new year, 1884, it was announced that the Government had accepted it, and that General Gordon was to be immediately sent out, and the announcement was greeted with general and enthusiastic applause. When Lord Salisbury read it in his library at Hatfield, he laid down the evening paper upon his knees with a gesture of despair. "They must have gone quite mad!" he exclaimed. His bewildered indignation at this expression of what he described later as "the frugal optimism" of Ministers, was not mitigated by what he had personally learnt of General Gordon while he was in office. He considered him, by his qualities as well as by his defects, to be the last possible man to be entrusted with any form of diplomatic mission.

Parliament met on February 5. On the 12th a vote of censure was moved in both Houses. Lord Salisbury, speaking to the vote, dismissed the fictional defence of an independent Egyptian Government in a phrase which Lord Cromer, in his historical record of events,¹ has selected as expressing the crux of the ethical condemnation to which Ministers had made themselves amenable. "They who have the absolute power of preventing lamentable events, and, knowing what is taking place, refuse to exercise that power, are responsible for what happens." He noted with biting irony the tardy abandonment of this "Olympic indifference." "The information that Hicks Pasha and all his force had been cut to pieces only very

¹ *Modern Egypt*, vol. i. p. 267.

slowly penetrated the mind of the Cabinet and induced them to consider whether there was anything in this world of the least importance to them except the repudiation of responsibility." The policy of Epicureanism had been followed by the policy of panic. Their first essay in authoritative intervention did not commend itself to him. At such a moment the public proclamation of complete abandonment of the Soudan had destroyed in his view the last chance of assistance from friendly tribes for the beleaguered garrisons. He concluded his speech by contrasting Liberal policy in action with the propaganda of its leaders in the past :

" We can remember when those who now hold office were very strong on the question of responsibilities. We can remember when they insisted on every platform that those who were then in power were responsible for the acts of the Turkish Government, over which they had no material hold or control whatever. Now, having absolute material hold and control over the action of the Egyptian Government, they try to persuade us that these terrible calamities, which they allowed the Egyptian Government and the gallant defenders of these fortresses to incur, do not involve their own responsibility at all. We can remember on another occasion, when the honour of England was at stake and her arms had been tarnished, that the Government of this country refused to do what every other Government that ever existed here would have done—they refused to revenge the defeat lest it should involve blood-guiltiness. Is there not blood-guiltiness here ? In this resolute renunciation of responsibility—in this abandonment of gallant men to an inevitable doom, in this giving up of 1000 women and children to all the hideous horrors of an Oriental victory—is there no blood-guiltiness here ? My Lords, it is on these things that I ask your verdict." (*Hansard, February 12, 1884*).

The public faith in a policy of headlines received an early shock at the hands of General Gordon himself. No sooner had he come into actual contact with the facts than he virtually announced the hopelessness of the mission which his impulse for self-sacrifice and his total incapacity for reasoning calculation had induced him to accept. At the moment of starting across the desert on his desperate embassy, he demanded that Zobeir Pasha should be sent after him,—a man known as “the king of slave-drivers,” whose banishment from the Soudan he had himself secured, and whose influence there rested on sanctions which were the negation of all that he himself represented. The Government did not grant his request, but they still clung to the authority of his name as their guarantee of success. They had indeed prepared no other reliance. When Lord Salisbury expressed doubts as to the infallibility of their emissary, “especially when he is acting under the instructions of Her Majesty’s Government,” and pressed for further information as to their plans, they would only reaffirm their formula of a “confidence in General Gordon,” admit ignorance as to his intentions, and note with pained surprise the Tory leader’s scepticism towards the superhuman prowess with which they credited their heroic scapegoat (*Hansard, February 29, 1884*).

General Gordon’s intentions and capacities, however, soon ceased to be a theme for parliamentary discussion. They were hidden with his actions behind the veil which within a month of his arrival at Khartoum descended, impenetrable, between him and the outer world. The tribes had risen in front of the dervish advance and had cut off all communication both with Cairo and the coast. The policy of peaceful evacuation through the magic of his influence became manifest to all as a dream. If the city and garrison

were to be saved and the man rescued whom the British Government had sent to his impossible task, a military expedition had become patently inevitable.

Throughout this Soudanese calamity the Opposition was accused—as Oppositions similarly placed must always be accused—of making party capital out of national disaster. But, as regarded the culminating catastrophe from which they might have hoped to reap, and did in fact reap, the greatest party advantage, they could at least claim to have done their best beforehand to prevent it. In the first week of April, Lord Salisbury made an appeal for action, so exact in its prophetic warning that he was able to read it nine months later to the House of Lords as an accurate record of what had happened.

“ The vice of all the policy of Her Majesty’s Government during these many months has been that resolutions of an intensely critical character have always been put off till the moment for carrying them out has passed. It seems to be a matter of great exertion—a matter of positive physical pain—for the Government to come to any resolution, and they only do it at the moment when the danger is actually imminent.”

He went through the record of useless bloodshed which had already taken place and continued :

“ Are these circumstances encouraging to us when we are asked to trust that, on the inspiration of the moment, when the danger comes, Her Majesty’s Government will find some means of relieving General Gordon ? I fear that the history of the past will be repeated in the future ; that, just again, when it is too late, the critical resolution will be taken ; some terrible news will come that the position of General Gordon is absolutely a forlorn and hopeless one ; and then, under the pressure of public wrath and parlia-

mentary censure, some desperate resolution of sending an expedition will be formed, too late to achieve the object which it is desired to gain ; too late to rescue this devoted man whom we have sent forward to his fate ; in time only to cast another slur upon the statesmanship of England and the resolution of the statesmen who guide England's councils." (*Hansard*, April 4, 1884.)

A fortnight later he returned to the charge :

" No deeper, no more vital disgrace could befall this country than that General Gordon should be allowed to perish in his undertaking without assistance from the English Government. Already there is sufficient of Egyptian blood to be laid at the door of Her Majesty's Government ; already we have made sacrifices enough of those whose kingdom we have taken over, whose responsibilities we have undertaken and to whose safety we are practically and substantially pledged. We have had now five massacres of Egyptian troops, massacres caused by the neglect of Her Majesty's Government,—Hicks, Baker, Sinkat, Moncrieff, and Shendy. I do not suppose so bloody an account—an account in which blood so mingled with disgrace was ever brought home to an English Government before. If they are resolved to make no effort to save this gallant man they will not only be covering the English name with dishonour, but they will be destroying that belief in English prowess which is the only hope they have of being able successfully to discharge their responsibilities in Egypt. . . . By their neglect and by the disgrace which, time after time, they pile upon the name of England, they are paralysing the power of this country. I hope they may even yet be induced to make some announcement that will alter the state of things in Egypt. But we at least cannot undertake the complicity of silence." (*Hansard*, April 22, 1884.)

That was in April. April passed ;—May ;—June ;—

July;—questions continued to be asked in Parliament; military authorities in London and civilian advisers in Cairo pressed privately for immediate action.¹ But the Prime Minister was proof against all appeals, whether from without or from within. He “saw no reason for believing that General Gordon was in any present danger.” In the course of that summer, Lady Salisbury met Lord Wolseley in the street and enquired hopefully as to the plans and preparations with which he must be busy. He threw up his hands in despair: “I have nothing to tell you,” he said, “there are *no* plans and *no* preparations.” August was half-way through before the decision to send relief was taken, and it was not till the first week in October that the expedition, under Lord Wolseley, started,—famous alike for the heroic energy of its effort and for its lamentable failure.

That marvellous and gratuitous five months’ delay has never been fully accounted for. No merely cynical explanation suffices: the credit and continuance of the Government were as much at stake as the honour of the country. The defence urged in Parliament was a sincere conviction that Gordon was in no real danger. In the rest of the Cabinet this conviction was comprehensible as being based upon the assurance of the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary—the opinion of the latter being at all times a reflection of that of his chief. It is Mr. Gladstone’s resolved disbelief that constitutes the crux of the mystery. It had no rational foundation. Expert opinion contradicted it quite as urgently and unequivocally as lay common sense. The catastrophe was so far from being unforeseeable that, as later enquiries on the spot proved, it was only a supreme exertion of courage, ingenuity, and endurance in its defence that prevented Khartoum

¹ *Modern Egypt*, vol. i. pp. 556-58 and 577-92.

from falling months before it actually did. The most reckless of gamblers would have refused to risk loss on such a basis of chances. Lord Salisbury, speaking to the vote of censure in the following February, accounted for it by Mr. Gladstone's dread of his own extremists. Twenty-four years before, in one of his *Quarterly* articles, he had himself supplied a more satisfactory explanation. He was discussing an abnormality in the Liberal leader's psychology :

“ His mind, with all its power, has this strange peculiarity that his reason will not work vigorously on any question in which he does not take a hearty interest ; and he can only take a hearty interest in one question at one time. On any question, therefore, which crosses the subject of his heart . . . his perceptions are blunted and his reason will not work true. . . . It [the engrossing subject] colours the medium through which all his political perceptions reach him and dictates every conclusion to which he comes.” (*Quarterly Review*, January 1861, p. 235.)

By an unfortunate coincidence such a subject, in the form of a parliamentary and constitutional struggle of the first magnitude, had in fact taken possession of Mr. Gladstone's thoughts in the summer of 1884. One must assume that as towards the unconnected tragedy enacting in the Soudan and all its inevitable sequences, his reason had for all practical purposes ceased to act.

The struggle in question was one engaged between the two Houses over the Bill for extending household suffrage to the counties, which had been introduced into Parliament in that session of 1884. On its merits, the measure met with little opposition

from the Conservative leaders. Lord Salisbury protested against the time chosen for making the most ignorant and disaffected class in Ireland supreme at the polling-booth. He considered the change inexpedient in Ireland and uncalled for in Great Britain, but on the score of principle he made no demur. Democracy had become an accomplished fact, and from the outset he refused to encourage the theorists on his own side who tried to make this an occasion for resuscitating a dead controversy. But parliamentary reform consists of two parts—enfranchisement and redistribution, and he maintained that in this particular case it was the latter that was by far the most important. The existing electorate numbered some three million. Two million new voters were to be added to these, and added exclusively in the county constituencies, transforming the hitherto parity in numbers between them and the boroughs into a grotesque disproportion. If anything like an equality in vote values was to be preserved, it was estimated that the rearrangement of seats would have to be as far-reaching and revolutionary as that which took place in the great Reform Bill of 1832.

The Government's proposal was not only to separate these two branches of its measure, but, against all precedent practice, to make them independent of one another. The present Bill was for enfranchisement alone. It was not till after it became law that, in the following year, a Redistribution of Seats Bill was to be introduced. If, for any reason, that measure failed to pass, the general election must take place on the new franchise with the old seats. It was a possible eventuality which had a peculiar interest for Conservatives. The gross inequalities and anomalies which would result would tell almost wholly against their party. Lord Salisbury calculated that it would

be deprived of as many as forty-seven seats, counting ninety-four on a division, upon which it might reckon if voting values were equally distributed.

Mr. Gladstone defended the unusual procedure on precisely the ground which made it offensive to his opponents. It would be impossible, he said, to get so large a Redistribution Bill through the House of Commons without the goodwill of the Opposition. That goodwill could only be ensured if they knew that, if it did not get through, they would have to face an election under the conditions described. In other words, the Conservative party was to be forced, with a pistol at its head, to accept without amendment any scheme of distribution and delimitation of seats which Liberal election agents might draw up.

This was the purpose avowed. Conservative wire-pullers divined a more sinister one in the background. They believed that the Government had no real intention of passing a Seats Bill at all. In a measure of such complicated detail, introduced in the last session of a Parliament, avoidance of success would be easy. Ministerialists, conscious of having lost favour in the country, were deliberately planning to secure an election on a constituency which would be a mockery of representation. These suspicions were discredited by the event : the proposal probably originated only in Mr. Gladstone's habitual impatience of any change being made in the measures which he presented to the House. But despotism has always given tyranny its opportunity, and it was an undoubted fact that for the last year or two Radical orators had been advocating the adoption of these precise tactics on the ground that what they regarded as a desirable distribution of voting power would thereby be made easy.

The situation, as it thus appeared, emphasised in

the eyes of the indignant Opposition the value of the safeguard which the Constitution had provided for such emergencies. If their premises were correct, a party which happened, for the time, to be in a majority in the elected Chamber were preparing to use that position to convert their temporary advantage into a permanent one : and—*ex hypothesi*—that intolerable conclusion could only be averted by external intervention.

A week after the Government's plan had been announced in the House of Commons, Lord Salisbury, speaking at Chelsea on March 12, stated that he and his friends regarded the issue raised as of such grave constitutional importance as to demand an appeal to the country before it was decided. The statement was rightly interpreted as an invitation to the House of Lords to intervene, and Radical wrath at once became vocal on every platform and in every newspaper of the party. A claim to interfere in a question exclusively concerned with the constitution of the Lower House was held to be a culminating act of presumption, and Lord Salisbury was accused of preparing to destroy on a side issue a measure of popular enfranchisement which he did not dare to resist openly.

That particular charge was sufficiently refuted in the course of the campaign that followed. The Conservative leaders pledged themselves so repeatedly and unequivocally in favour of the extended franchise that, had a dissolution taken place and they been returned to power, they must themselves have enacted it. But it was undoubtedly true that Lord Salisbury welcomed the opportunity offered by Mr. Gladstone's despotic tactics to work for a dissolution. The Soudanese disasters, following upon the failures and self-contradictions of the Government's Irish policy, had produced a revulsion of feeling in the country which made him confident of electoral victory.

If one is to judge from the general election a year later, and from the large gains which the Conservatives then made in the boroughs where alone the old electorate survived, he was probably right. Thus, throughout the agitation which followed, he was aiming at something more than victory on the question in dispute. It would only not be true to say that he was playing the party game, because that phraseology did not represent his attitude towards the party issue. Least of all now, when happenings in Egypt were exemplifying all that he most contemned in national policy, and were already producing sinister reactions over the whole field of foreign relations. The expulsion of this Government from office had become, in his eyes, the most urgent of patriotic duties.

The mistake which had been made in 1882 of taking the House of Lords into action without sufficient certainty of public support was not to be repeated. The meeting at Chelsea was followed by a series of others called during that spring and summer in all parts of the country. Provincial Conservatism was already in a condition of ebullient militancy over the Soudan catastrophe and resolutions of support poured in from every quarter. Lady John Manners wrote to condole with him on the "perpetual strain" which the agitation put upon him. "It is rather," he replied, "a perpetual tiny pull. When I die of it my epitaph must be: 'Died of writing inane answers to empty-headed Conservative Associations.' It is a miserable death to look forward to" (*March 9, 1884*).

His efforts were rewarded. In spite of the threats which appeared with each morning's press reports and articles, he had singularly little difficulty in persuading the majority of the Lords to do battle. Lord Cairns, the champion of prudence, moved the reasoned amendment to the second reading of the Franchise

Bill which embodied the position taken up. It approved of the franchise extended, but refused assent to a Bill “unaccompanied by provisions for so apportioning the right to return members as to ensure a true and fair representation of the people,”—or by any security that that branch of the question would be dealt with at all.

Lord Salisbury spoke to the division, and was gay in the confidence of his defiance. He chaffed Lord Rosebery for having talked of “torrents and tempests and precipices and a great many other terrible things, in the midst of which we are to find ourselves if we reject this Bill,” and he paraphrased a warning of Lord Fitzgerald’s who, he declared, had said that the House of Lords had been built by the side of the river, “so that members of the Conservative majority might escape by the penny steamboats while the people were thundering on the other side.” He rejected absolutely the deduction drawn from such anticipations,—that the peers should safeguard their privileges by submitting on all occasions of conflict to the decision of the House of Commons : “Nobody,—no man who values his manhood and his self-respect, no man who prizes his intellectual freedom,—would wish to retain the privileges of this House upon the terms upon which they offer them to us.” And he concluded by emphasising the distinction between the people and their parliamentary representatives, upon which he always insisted in this connection.

“ We have no fear of the humiliation with which we are threatened. We do not shrink from bowing to the opinion of the people, whatever that opinion may be. If it is their judgment that there should be enfranchisement without re-distribution, I should be very much surprised ; but I should not attempt to dispute their decision. . . . I feel that we are bound, as

guardians of their interests, to call upon the Government to appeal to the people and by the result of that appeal we will abide." (*Hansard, July 8, 1884.*)

Lord Cairns' amendment was passed by a majority of fifty-nine votes. Ministers responded by announcing an immediate prorogation. Parliament was to reassemble for a new session in October, when the same measure would be again presented and sent up to the Lords under the same conditions as before. The interval was to be spent in rousing the country to such an expression of indignation as would, it was hoped, compel the Peers to pass the Bill before Christmas and thus attain the ministerial object of enfranchising the new voters before the measure for Redistribution of Seats was brought forward.

The following letter, written three days after the division, was in reply to one from Canon MacColl, an able clergyman of the Tractarian party, an occasional writer for the press, and a friend and follower of Mr. Gladstone's, but possessed also of great personal confidence in Lord Salisbury. While urging compromise in the present conflict, he had expressed his own hope for some form of co-operation in the future between the moderate elements in both parties, in which, rather surprisingly, he looked to Lord Salisbury to take the lead. After some phrases of thanks for the kindness of his language, Lord Salisbury proceeded :

To Canon MacColl, July 11, 1884.

" The position which you, too indulgently, contemplate for me is one for which I am in no way fit. To be the leader of a large party,—still more to be the leader of anything resembling a Coalition—requires in a large measure the gifts of pliancy and optimism, and I, unfortunately, am very poorly endowed in either respect.

“ Nor again can I recognise any motive for action in the fear that my party, as you rather prognosticate, will throw me over. I do not think such an issue by any means impossible, but the idea is not deterrent : on the contrary it is a soothing prospect to dwell upon, like the mirage in the desert. English politics keep hold of those who are in them because the framework of modern life is so tight that men find it hard to change their pursuits. But to those who know English politics well, they are not attractive,—their highest rewards confer no real power. Their strongest men—you give me an instance in Mr. Gladstone and the three F’s—have to carry out ideas that are not their own. And they fill up life with an incessant labour which to those who are not blessed with optimism leaves behind it the feeling of an almost unmixed waste of time.

“ As to the more political portion of the question, the case is very simple. I quite recognise the danger of defeat which attends the course we have selected. Various men will variously estimate the extent of that danger, but its existence no one can doubt. But the alternative which Mr. Gladstone presented to us was the absolute effacement of the Conservative party. It would not have reappeared as a political force for thirty years.—This conviction to which, after careful study, I came, greatly simplified for me the computation of risks. An element of popularity more or less in our ‘ platform ’ was wholly immaterial if the constituencies were to be so arranged that our platform had not the slightest chance of being received.”

The threatened agitation started with a “ monster demonstration ” through the streets of London, in which the demonstrators were alternatively computed at 40,000 and 200,000,—a contrast in partisan statistics which was constantly reproduced during the following weeks. At a Carlton meeting on the 15th, Lord Salisbury invited the Conservative Peers and Commoners to meet their opponents with their own weapons, and confided

to them his House of Lords' plans for November. It would not be necessary this time to ask for any vote against the Franchise Bill,—only for a postponement either of its second reading or Committee stage to the following May. Ministers had not looked ahead. They had fired their shot. To kill their own Bill by an unprecedented double prorogation within six months was an expedient practically impossible to resort to for the sole purpose of spiting the Peers. But, on the other hand, the normal procedure of an adjournment over Christmas would yield the very point at issue by forcing them to pass their Seats Bill through the Commons while the Franchise Bill was still held up in the Lords. Their only escape from the dilemma would be the dissolution which they so manifestly dreaded. The plan had a further advantage which Lord Salisbury did not proclaim to the meeting but pointed out later in a private letter to his chief Whip. The action taken would be irrevocable. By parliamentary custom, when once a date is fixed by vote for any stage of a Bill, it cannot be anticipated. "This would save us from all attempts at compromises, bridges, open doors and the rest. . . . And that is the danger I am most afraid of—some cunning half-measure which surrenders everything but may seem to the obtuse Lords to save their dignity." (*To Mr. R. Winn, September 4, 1884.*)

There could be no doubt as to the strength of the tactical position thus secured. "Compromises and bridges" soon began to be popular themes for discussion on the ministerial side. Lord Salisbury, having started his campaign in a speech of flaming defiance at Sheffield, retired to contemplate from Puys the foreseen development of his adversaries' difficulties. "The Government are in a hole," he wrote to a correspondent on September 20; "it is not our business to pull them

out." He had received a letter from the Duke of Argyll a few days before, conveying a proposition of Mr. Gladstone's that, when the Franchise Bill had passed the Commons again, a Seats Bill should be "laid upon the table" there, and that then the Lords, without waiting for it, should at once pass the Franchise Bill into law. Lord Salisbury answered that he could see no advantage in the proposal. If the Government intended to pass the Seats Bill through the Commons, there could be no harm in keeping the Franchise Bill waiting for it. If they did not so intend, "we should look unutterably foolish if we had allowed the Franchise Bill to pass without it" (*September 14, 1884*).

Meanwhile, the competing agitations went on. Ministers had staked all upon the minatory effect of popular wrath upon the Peers' rank and file, and they spared no effort to excite it. It was said that between the two parties 700 meetings were held in the course of the following ten weeks, with an aggregate attendance variously computed at from two to four millions. The numerical preponderance was on the ministerial side, but though the counter agitation covered the smaller area, it was strong in its insistent and unanswered challenge to the verdict of the ballot-boxes. The Liberal press treated the challenge as an insult and counted heads manfully. But their figures were disputed; rival figures were hurled at them, and the dramatic effect of an uprising of popular indignation was lost in the wrangled balancing of numbers.

At the end of September, Lord Salisbury concluded his own contribution to the flood of oratory by an attack upon the heart of the enemy's position in the south-west of Scotland. Glasgow was the place first visited, and its Tory minority asserted themselves

vigorously. Following Midlothian precedents, they flocked to welcome their champion on his arrival. A travelling companion wrote a description of the scene to his wife. As he stepped out of the train nothing was visible in the great station but a sea of heads ; every available inch of horizontal space was occupied ; men were banked up, a living wall, against the station's sides, were clutching on to the standing rolling-stock, were even swarming over the roof of Lord Salisbury's carriage as his train slowed down to the platform. The din of cheering under the arched roof was so terrific that when he shouted at the full power of his voice, no word was audible at ten yards' distance. At the meetings that followed, enthusiasm was as keen though more disciplined. "They have been, I think, the heartiest I have ever attended," he reported to Lady Salisbury. And the assertion with which he closed the peroration of his principal speech : "The people will stand by the Lords," was received with passionately prolonged applause.

He could fairly boast that he had his share of democratic support. Canon MacColl, a few weeks before, in continuance of his rôle as peacemaker, had written a friendly criticism of the Tory leader to the *Spectator* and had sent him a copy of the paper. The editor had appended a note to the letter deprecating any confidence being placed in so marked a "foe of the people." "Mr. Hutton's interpolation," Lord Salisbury commented, "is a curious case of survival of expressions. That impersonation of 'the people' as a thing you can love or hate—or be the 'foe' of—belongs to the dialect of the French Convention. It means nothing. However unchristian he may think me, does he imagine I hate the people who vote Tory as well as the people who vote Radical,—the people who cheer me as well as the people who hiss me ?

"The only restraint I should like to impose on the liberty of the press would be to make political abstractions penal." (*August 24, 1884.*)

Though railway-station oratory had to be tolerated as part of the ritual of propaganda in a place visited directly for that purpose, he resisted it strenuously in those more informal aspects of it which Mr. Gladstone had popularised. At Carlisle, on his way to Scotland, a large crowd awaited him, cheering continuously as long as the train remained in the station. But as one of his companions reported in comic despair to Lady Salisbury, "He wouldn't so much as put his head out of the window, but sat touching his hat with a ghastly grin in the furthest corner,—and it was that dreadful old travelling wideawake!"

There was a ten days' interval between his engagements at Glasgow and those at Kelso, which he utilised to go northward to Gordon Castle, to consult with his lieutenants, the Duke of Richmond and Lord Cairns. He stopped on the way at Lord John Manners' house in Perthshire, and was told that six reporters had appeared in the neighbouring town of Dunkeld, making enquiries as to his next destination. He found a sporting excitement in evading their attentions. "It is rather like a paper-chase," he observes to his wife, and two days later reports triumphantly that he has "given them the slip." He was less successful in concealing his movements on his return journey, and at Perth had to submit for a whole half-hour to the "endearments" of his supporters clamouring for a speech. A few days afterwards, during a stop of some minutes late in the evening at Galashiels, one of a noisy crowd of enthusiasts who had been vainly trying to arouse response from the interior of the darkened and closely curtained saloon-carriage, was heard to exclaim with scandalised indignation : "This

is nae politics ! ” “ Decidedly,” was Lord Salisbury’s conclusion, “ as long as the G.O.M. lives, Scotch railway stations are places to be avoided.”

He brought only one anxiety south with him. “ I left my two wise counsellors in the north in a very fair frame of mind,” he wrote to his wife on October 12. “ They will still give me trouble in the future—but I hope to pull through.”

The testing crisis was never reached. For fighting a constitutional issue the Government suffered under a disability which no big words could remove. “ Say what they will,” wrote Lord Salisbury to Sir Stafford Northcote on October 9, “ their horror of a dissolution does not go down.” Various tentative suggestions for a possible settlement were made by Liberal spokesmen, but none that gave the security required either for the passing of a Seats Bill or for the impartiality of its provisions. When Parliament met on October 23, and while the Franchise Bill was going through its successive stages in the Commons, both Houses maintained their battlefield unbroken. But the third power in the Constitution was already at work in the background.

Lord Salisbury had received no such royal appeal to surrender as had been addressed to him two years before. But, during the autumn, the fears stirred in the Queen by the violence of the agitation and her anxiety to end it were conveyed to him through more than one channel. In October she approached him more directly. Sir Henry Ponsonby, acting under her instructions, made an attempt to bring him and Lord Hartington together. It was not very successful. The Whig Minister said that it would be useless for him to approach the Opposition leaders while they persisted in maintaining the Peers’ right to override the House of Commons, backed as it now was by a

popular outcry ;¹ Lord Salisbury retorted that any Government could get up an agitation of public meetings, and that "such a doctrine, if accepted, would reduce the House of Lords to impotence." He tried in the same letter to reassure the Queen as to the issues of violence which she dreaded. Since it manifestly *was* possible to pass both Bills in one session, it might be hoped that as the course of business in Parliament developed, Ministers would realise that fact and "the question would solve itself naturally." Even if they did not, the agitation could not long continue, since a brief interval of time must bring a dissolution, "and when once a dissolution has taken place, the difficulty is at an end" (*October 20, 1884*).

Her Majesty was being coincidentally assured by Mr. Gladstone that, if a dissolution *did* take place, the elections would be fought on the issue, not of House of Commons' representation, but of the continued survival of the House of Lords, and she refused to accept this serene estimate of the future course of events. Sir Henry Ponsonby tried again, and asked Lord Salisbury for suggestions for a compromise. Lord Salisbury assured him that the Opposition were prepared for "a reasonable compromise." But, of course, that could not include a negation of the essence of the Lords' July resolution—that "there must be adequate security in the proposals of the Government that the Franchise Bill should not come into operation except as part of an entire scheme." To withdraw from that position in face of the threats addressed to them by Cabinet Ministers within the last three weeks would involve an abandonment of the Lords' constitutional rights to which he could not consent. He regretted that "the Prime Minister's language seemed to lay down that any course which does *not* make the Lords

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. pp. 550-51.

pass through the Caudine forks *does* make the Government do so."

To Sir Henry's request for suggestions he replied, though unhopefully, by proposing that the House of Lords should read the Franchise Bill a second time and then merely keep it waiting till the Seats Bill came up from the Lower House. "I fail to understand the objections to this course"¹ (*October 28, 1884*).

The objection lay in the keeping of the Franchise Bill waiting—the point upon which Mr. Gladstone had staked his honour in resistance. The field of negotiation was now narrowed to the search for an expedient whereby the "adequate security" required by the Lords should be provided without that inadmissible condition—and the Prime Minister's repeated enquiry as to "what the Opposition required in Redistribution" pointed the way.

On October 31, Her Majesty, acting under the advice of the Duke of Argyll, broke the end of Columbus's egg by writing to the two leaders, and inviting them to meet and discuss with each other the character of the proposed measure.²

Lord Salisbury replied that "it would give him great pleasure to consult with anyone whom her Majesty wished him to consult with," and that he would do what in him lay "to bring the controversy speedily to a just and honourable conclusion"³ (*November 3*). The Prime Minister's reply was less satisfactory. He deferred immediate acceptance, and appears to have spent the next fortnight in efforts to obtain "informal" assurances, first through Sir Michael Beach and then through Sir Stafford Northcote. Lord Salisbury warned Sir Michael against any "preliminary agreement"—and Sir Stafford did not

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 559.

² *Ibid.* p. 563.

³ *Ibid.* p. 566.

require warning. He and Lord Salisbury, so the latter told Sir Michael, had unreservedly accepted the Queen's proposal for a formal conference, and they must leave it at that. The Tory chief had become suspicious under the Prime Minister's postponements, and while assuring a supporter, Sir John Kennaway, of his own willingness to negotiate, said that he doubted whether on Mr. Gladstone's part there was more than a "desire to have the credit of negotiation" (*November 15*).

But he was wrong in his inference. The Prime Minister was preparing to make his entry into conference the occasion for full concession. No explanation appears of the delays which he had interposed; they may have been inspired by requirements of Cabinet diplomacy or by hopes of such a last moment mutiny on Lord Salisbury's back benches as had won him his victory over the Arrears Act. There were no signs of it at present. On November 11 the Franchise Bill passed its third reading in the Commons and started upon its perilous voyage through the Upper House. The second reading there was fixed for the 18th; the "big" division was to be taken on the motion for going into Committee two days later, and on the 12th Lord Salisbury sent out his whips for the crucial struggle. No defections in the ranks of his majority were reported, though his "two wise counsellors" had hurried southward intent on shepherding their chief from desperate courses.

Such precaution proved uncalled for. The terms offered were too good. On the afternoon of the 17th the Government's proposal was read out in both Houses. If they received "adequate" assurance of the Franchise Bill being passed into law by Christmas, they would be willing to make the provisions of the Seats Bill "a subject of friendly communication at

once and before introduction";—to prosecute the thus agreed measure with all speed, so that it should pass its second reading in the Commons simultaneously with the taking of the Franchise Bill in Committee by the Lords;—and to make its passage "in a form agreeable to the House" a "vital" Government question.

It was understood that the "friendly communication" was to take the form of a Conference between the Government and Opposition leaders in both Houses. Ministers required, at first, that the engagement to let the Franchise Bill through should be immediately entered into; but Lord Salisbury insisted that it should be made dependent on the Conference reaching an agreement, and his claim was conceded. If the leaders failed to produce an agreed Bill, the Peers would remain as free to hold over the Franchise Bill as they were now. Under these circumstances Lord Salisbury advised acceptance of the terms at a meeting of his followers called at the Carlton on the 18th. The same evening in the House of Lords he moved the postponement of the Committee stage of the Franchise Bill for a fortnight, in order to give time for the Conference to do its work.

This arrangement gave all, and more than all, that the Opposition had fought for. An agreed Redistribution Bill, whose provisions the Government were to be pledged beforehand to pass into law, had replaced the threat of a dictated one of uncertain enactment, and the Franchise Bill would not be released by the Peers until that conclusion was ensured. The "adequate security," for demanding which they had been for three months furiously denounced from Liberal platforms throughout the length and breadth of the land, had been conceded to them in ample measure. Popular agitation, unbacked by confidence

in the popular vote, had made its promoters look not a little foolish.

Lord Salisbury, however, was not enthusiastic over his success. He had failed in his ulterior aim. Though victorious in the constitutional battle, he had been defeated in the party one. His disappointment can hardly have been acute. The conviction which had been borne in on him with increasing force during the struggle,—that his opponents' judgment of the electoral position concurred entirely with his own,—must have long destroyed any real hope of compelling an appeal to the constituencies. But there is an unquestionable note of regret—almost of apology—in the report which he wrote on the evening of the Carlton meeting to Lord Cranbrook, the most militant of his colleagues :

To Lord Cranbrook, November 18, 1884.

“ On the whole, we came to the conclusion that we could not safely refuse to enter upon the communications to which the Government invite us. We pledge ourselves to nothing until the result of them is ascertained. If we had taken the other course we should have gone to a dissolution very heavily weighted.

“ The Carlton meeting was practically unanimous (Redesdale and Oranmore were partly dissentient), and a great many indications combined to prove that the ice was cracking all round us, and that we should have led the party to great disaster if we had declined to negotiate.”

The Conference,—in which, except on one point, no difficulty was found in coming to an agreement,—was the occasion for a curious play of personalities. Though Liberal electioneers were discontented with the result, Mr. Gladstone used to affirm afterwards that on nearly all the points on which he had differed

from his collaborators it was he who had been the champion of Conservatism : “ I kept asking myself which was the policeman and which was the thief.” That was probably because the Conservatism on which he always prided himself consisted wholly of reverence for tradition,—an element which counted for very little in Lord Salisbury’s political creed. Electoral districts—the division of the electorate into mathematically equal units—had for long been a Tory and, indeed, a Whig bugbear—the war-cry of extreme Radicalism in the fifties and sixties. This ideal, apart from its doctrinaire symmetry, was approached in what was the most prominent and revolutionary feature of the new settlement,—*i.e.* the breaking up of the counties and big towns as units of multiple membership, and the practically universal introduction of single member constituencies of approximately equal size. Lord Salisbury admitted that he was responsible for this change, and defended it against the disapproval of some of his more conventionally minded followers. It was accompanied by instructions to the boundary Commissioners that, in fixing the limits of the new constituencies, they should “have regard to the pursuits of the population.” So conditioned, he maintained, it offered the best opening available for the representation of social minorities. Residential and business quarters which, if the inhabitants of the town continued to vote as a whole, must have been merged in the working-class element would thus be able to return members of their own. Personally, he would have preferred, and in his speeches that summer had advocated, a more accurate and elaborate system of minority representation. But on that, as he wrote to Lord Cranbrook after the agreement was concluded, he had found his own party too profoundly divided for insistence.

Even more bound up with Conservative tradition than the dread of "electoral districts" was the patronage of small boroughs—dating from the squires' domination over the proprietary boroughs of the pre-Reform period. In a sketch of the original ministerial plan which had appeared in the newspapers, and though unauthorised was generally credited, all existing boroughs of more than 10,000 inhabitants had been left with separate representation. The advent of Tory collaboration was marked by the more drastic disfranchisement of every unit of less than 15,000 population, with a corresponding increase in the representation of large towns. It may be noted as evidence of the inevitable influence of the local wire-puller in any purely party scheme, that of the thirty-five seats which the original ministerial project would have saved, twenty-three were represented by Liberals. But Lord Salisbury's advocacy of the change rested upon wider grounds. He repeatedly urged at the time, both in public and in private, his conviction that the traditional view had become obsolete, and that it was to the large centres of population that the Conservative party must henceforth look for its main urban support. For the next twenty years this forecast was justified by the election returns. He himself accounted for the fact by the demand upon the reasoning faculties which Conservatism makes. The intellectual activity engendered in great towns arms men both against the economic fallacies and the merely emotional appeals of Radical propagandists.

The only point upon which the Conference was ever in danger of disruption was that of the University seats. Ministers insisted upon their abolition; Lord Salisbury, with even greater rigidity, upon their retention. There came a day when a deadlock was reached, and he reported to his wife that he feared the

Conference must break up. The occasion has a family interest as being the only one on record in which Lady Salisbury took direct political action. Normally, she always maintained that women did nothing but harm by intervening in their husbands' business. But on this occasion she drove down to Downing Street at tea-time and asked to see the Prime Minister. She appealed to him by all the old Church and Oxford memories which were associated with their earlier intimacy, and also staked her knowledge of her husband's character on the assurance that it was a point upon which he would never yield. Mr. Gladstone gave way, and told her that it was owing to her intervention that he had done so. She was characteristically sceptical of the compliment, but in all probability there was no antagonism of his own to overcome, only deference to his followers' prejudices to deprecate. A day or two later he returned the visit,—celebrating the successful conclusion of the Conference by coming to tea at Arlington Street. Lord Salisbury was not present, and Lady Salisbury asked Dr. Liddon¹ as the only other guest, so that, during an hour's eloquent conversation upon theology and literature, politics were not even distantly alluded to.

¹ The Rev. H. P. Liddon, D.D., 1829–90. Ireland Professor of Exegesis at Oxford, and for twenty years Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral. Though eminent as a theologian, he was mainly known for his gift of preaching. His sermons by their spiritual fervour, wide scholarship, and brilliant eloquence of style, combined with a singular charm of voice and delivery, attracted congregations which, week by week during his months of residence at St. Paul's, filled the space under the dome and overflowed into the nave and transepts. Though fundamentally an uncompromising Conservative, he had many points of contact with Mr. Gladstone; in his Church views, his literary and historical cultivation, and, specifically, in the sympathy which he had shown with the Liberal leader's denunciations of Turkish cruelties in '76–78. The public part which he had taken on that occasion had permanently angered both Lord Beaconsfield and the Queen. But he was an attached friend of Lady Salisbury's of many years' standing, and was a constant visitor at Hatfield.

CHAPTER V

LORD SALISBURY'S FIRST MINISTRY, 1885

Two sessions, divided only by an interval of continuous platform speaking, had been devoted to the constitutional battle, and it was to the general relief that Parliament adjourned in December till the third week in February. Lord Salisbury took the opportunity for a short trip with some of his family to the Riviera and Italy. They were at Naples when the telegram reached Europe announcing the fall of Khartoum, and with it the death of the man who, more than any within living memory, had fired public imagination in England. The consciousness of his wonderful defence, at first with a single comrade, and then for five long months in an utter solitude of race and religion; the cries for help, incredulous of desertion, which had latterly pierced—in brief and uncertain rumours—through the investing horde of savages; the ache of anxiety with which during all that winter his countrymen had watched the relief force fighting its way, inch by inch, across the desert; the confident hope by which that anxiety had recently been stilled,—all contributed to the passion of emotion stirred by the news of that hope's collapse within forty-eight hours of its achievement.

Parliament met on February 19, and notice was immediately given of a vote of censure in both Houses;—Lord Salisbury had reached England two days before. When the vote was divided upon in the Commons the

Ministerial majority fell to fourteen. Even that was recognised as having been obtained by a supreme straining of party discipline. In private, Liberals and Radicals of approved constancy were outspoken in indignant repudiation of their leaders. It was a notable instance of the power of contagious feeling. No constituents' interests were involved ; no practical issue was at stake ; for the mischief was done and was past remedy. But the excitement of shame and anger which swept over the nation reacted upon individual members with a force that Whips were impotent to control.

Such an opening of the session was felt to be an augury of things to come. Some of Lord Salisbury's followers, in confidence of near approach to the responsibilities of office, pressed him to make a positive pronouncement of Conservative policy in Egypt.

To Lord Cairns, February 20, 1885.

“ There is a great pressure from our men for the declaration of a ‘policy’ I take the general objects of our policy to be to keep Egypt from European interference on the one side and from anarchy on the other. Interference with internal government is no part of our political aim and should only be practised so far as the higher dictates of humanity require. It is mostly required for stopping the Slave Trade, and we may do much to prevent *cruelty* of government, but I do not believe in the plan of moulding the Egyptians to our civilisation. As long as they are Mahomedans that is impossible, and we must not forget that, though we have often ruled mixed creeds, or creeds other than Mohammedan, we have never yet ruled Mohammedans alone. The only place in which we have tried it is Afghanistan, and then it was not precisely a success.”

He did as he was asked in speaking to the vote of

censure in the Lords. The public deliverance differed from this private one by the omission, in any direct form, of his objections to internal interference. Perhaps a prevision as to how far the "higher dictates of humanity" might force him to ignore them made him cautious of pledging himself on the subject.

"Let us examine broadly what are the interests of England in this matter. With Mediterranean politics, as such, we have no great reason to concern ourselves. France may be mistress in Algeria and Tunis; Morocco may go its own way; and it is said that Italy has views in Tripoli; but Egypt stands in a peculiar position. It is the road to India. The condition of Egypt can never be indifferent to us, and, more than that, after all the sacrifices that we have made, after all the efforts that this country has put forth, after the position that we have taken up in the eyes of the world, we have a right, and it is our duty to insist upon it, that our influence shall be predominant in Egypt. I do not care by what technical arrangements this result is obtained. . . . A good Government, like any other organised being, must pass through the stages of infancy to maturity. There must be a long stage of infancy during which this Government is unable to defend itself, and if it is to exist for any useful purpose, it requires during that period protection and security, which it can only derive from the action of an external Power. It is that protection and security that England must give." (*Hansard, February 26, 1885.*)

There was an element of fundamental insincerity in the parliamentary conflict of this session. Ministers could not really dread a defeat which would substitute their successors' programme for their own performance as the decisive interest in the approaching

elections. Their failure abroad had not been limited to the bloody tragedy of the Soudan. There were growing indications of the extent to which England's influence in Europe had been lowered. She had proposed the year before to raise a loan for Egypt on her own guarantee. The proposal had not only been rejected by the "Caisse de la Dette," which had insisted upon adding yet one more fetter to the hamper of Egypt's international indebtedness, but had been made the occasion for a concerted continental challenge of British administration in the country. And among the representatives who had supported France's lead in this demand for a "multiple control" had appeared not only the Russian and Austrian, but also the German, upon whose good offices in similar emergencies England hitherto had always been able to count.

A difficulty of a more dangerous character was preparing with Russia. In the previous year her almost automatic advance in Central Asia had brought her into actual contact with the borderland districts of Afghanistan, and she had agreed to a delimitation of frontiers by commissioners on the spot. But in the course of this winter her attitude had suffered a notable change. She had suddenly claimed a line which was far in advance of one which she herself had previously suggested ; had refused consent even to the consideration of any intermediate proposal, and had demanded in particular that Penjdeh, a strong place which was and had been for years in Afghan possession, should be placed on her side of the frontier. The British Government could not agree, and a deadlock had been reached. This hostile development was suggestively coincident with a curious exhibition of temper at Berlin. On March 2, in the course of a colonial debate in the Reichstag, Prince Bismarck had publicly de-

nounced the loquacious futility of Downing Street as making negotiation with it intolerable. His brutalities were generally symptomatic, and taken in conjunction with the action of his representatives in Cairo, with Russia's defiant attitude in Central Asia, and with whispers of trouble brewing in Turkey, the outburst presented sinister possibilities.

The contradictory directions in which Lord Salisbury's wishes were drawn, accordingly as this situation was contemplated from a national or a party point of view, were reflected in his utterances. On February 19, in the House of Lords, he had spoken bitterly of the policy "which has left us isolated in Europe, is calling up threatening clouds in Asia, and has alienated our Colonies"; and, closing his speech on the Egyptian vote of censure with a similar reference to "the great dangers now confronting us abroad," he had called for the immediate dismissal of Ministers.

"If you continue to trust them, if you continue for any party reason to abandon to their care the affairs which they have hitherto so hopelessly mismanaged, you must expect to go on from bad to worse; you must expect to lose the little prestige which you retain; you must expect to find in other portions of the world the results of the lower consideration which you occupy in the eyes of mankind." (*Hansard*, February 26, 1885.)

The other point of view was presented in a letter to Lord Cairns a week later :

To Lord Cairns, March 3, 1885.

"Matters are gloomy,—I never saw them gloomier. We have differences amounting to very serious tension with France, Russia, and Germany, which carries Austria. Add to that Egypt, Ireland, a crushing Budget in prospect, and trade which will not revive.

I cannot be thankful enough to those fourteen gentlemen who stood between us and such an inheritance as that. But can the Government go on ? ”

A month later the Central Asian difficulty reached an acute stage. Throughout February the Russian troops had continued their activities,—occupying place after place in territory claimed by the Afghans and approaching perilously near to others actually held by them. The Afghans were responsively excited, and to avert the danger of a collision the Governments of London and St. Petersburg bound themselves to stop all advances beyond the positions actually held by either side until a settlement had been reached. This agreement was signed on March 17, and on March 30 the Russian commander attacked Penjdeh, routed its Afghan garrison with great slaughter, and established an occupation of the disputed fortress.

The British Cabinet retorted on this breach of faith with unwonted vigour. They called out the Army Reserve and applied to Parliament for a war credit of eleven millions. The Russian Foreign Office professed—in all probability with truth—to be ignorant of their officers' action, and on May 2 consented to refer the question of responsibility for what had happened to neutral arbitration. All that survived of the short-lived crisis was the opportunity which it had incidentally offered of escape from the rash pledge “to smash the Mahdi” which Ministers had given during the first outburst of emotion after the death of Gordon. The troops sent out to Suakin for that purpose were passed on to Bombay to reinforce the army of defence in India. The Khartoum relief force was already in full retreat upon the frontier of Egypt proper and the Soudan was finally abandoned,

to remain for another thirteen years under the dark tyranny of the desert fanatics. It had by now become recognised on all sides that under present conditions the catastrophe of January was irretrievable. On May 18, Lord Salisbury took leave of the subject with a brief, stern recapitulation of the Government's failures, dwelling particularly on the reckless slaughter of their opponents, again and again repeated and unjustified by any result obtained : " Arab blood poured out upon the desert like water for no cause or reason whatever."

The removal of the immediate danger of a rupture with Russia had not reassured him as to the general state of our relations abroad. His uneasiness was expressed in a constant critical questioning in the House of Lords, which at length brought a reproof from Lord Granville. Such continued depreciation of his own Government's intentions and actions would have a discouraging effect on friendly Powers. The dilemma involved was one to which Governments and Oppositions have never found the same answer. If positions had been reversed, would Lord Salisbury have accepted the defence which he now offered ?

" Our absolute sovereign is the people of this country, and it is they and they alone who can bring a remedy to the mischief that is going on. If they do not interfere, no one can interfere. You have a form of government from many points of view purely democratic and you must take it with the incidents that naturally adhere to it, and one of those incidents is publicity of deliberation. The authority which decides in the first place is the Cabinet, and it decides in secret, and it is right in maintaining that secrecy to the utmost. But the authority to which you must appeal from the Cabinet is the people,—and their deliberations are conducted in the open field. If they are to be rightly informed, you must deal fully and

frankly with all the subjects which must form the basis of their determination." (*Hansard*, May 12, 1885.)

The rank and file of the party had not the same personal reasons as their leaders for deprecating a change of Ministers, and the electoral argument which should have appealed to them was quite inadequate to control the sentiment of righteous wrath and demand for its expression which the events of the last year or two had engendered. Sir Stafford Northcote was fitted neither by his natural temper nor his actual physical condition to satisfy his followers in this mood. With the rational but ineffectual aim of attracting support from malcontents on the ministerial benches his efforts were constantly directed to lowering rather than raising the temperature of debate. The result was that, during this session, the discontent which had hitherto been confined to a few excitable spirits became general, and Lord Salisbury had some difficulty in meeting the appeals which reached him privately to come to the rescue of his party in the Lower House : "I will gladly do anything I can to help," he wrote to Lord Randolph Churchill on one such occasion, "but always with one reservation,—I am bound to Sir Stafford Northcote as a colleague, by a tie not of expediency but of honour, and I could not take part in anything which would be at variance with entire loyalty to him" (April 23, 1885).

The outbreak of the Russian crisis had closed all ranks for a brief period in patriotic sympathy, and after the farewell spoken to the Soudan tragedy there came an apparent lull in the parliamentary battle. On June 7, Lord Salisbury replied to Lady John Manners, who had reported a prediction of Lord Randolph's that the Government's defeat was near at hand :

"R. C. is too sanguine a man for his gossip to be taken at its full value, so I hope that, in spite of appearances, the Ministry is not breaking up. Nothing would be more intolerable than a ministerial crisis just now—and nothing would be harder on the Tories. To have to govern six months with a hostile but dying Parliament is the very worst thing that can happen to us."

But Lord Randolph was right. The next day, Monday the 8th, the House had before it an amendment to the Budget moved by Sir Michael Hicks Beach, deprecating increases on the Beer Tax and the Succession duty. Considering what the loyalty of Government supporters had already withstood, the issue did not appear one likely to strain it to breaking point. A day or two before, Lord Salisbury, in urging Sir Stafford Northcote not to hurry back to town too soon after a bad cold, had remarked that there was nothing so far as he knew to bring him up "even on Monday." But seventy-six of the Ministerialists were absent from the division unpaired—some of the more guileless writing afterwards to the newspapers to complain of not having been "whipped." The Irish voted with the Opposition, the Government was beaten by a majority of twelve votes and immediately resigned office.

The tactics of the Conservative front bench in challenging the division were criticised, though the event was probably inevitable,—if not on this issue then on another. A Government anxious for defeat cannot ultimately be refused by an Opposition which has for months been denouncing it as a public danger. But, for the Tories as a party, the evil of the event was unquestionable. "The prospect before us is very serious," wrote Lord Salisbury to Lord Cranbrook on the Wednesday; "the vote on Monday night was anything but a subject for congratulation." There

could be no immediate appeal to the country. That very week the Seats Bill passed through its final stages in the House of Lords, and with its passage the old constituencies ceased to have any legal existence. The machinery for bringing the new ones into being could not be completed before November. A dissolution was therefore impossible before that date, and after such an interval the judgment of the country could no longer be taken directly upon the record of Liberal failure; while the outgoing Government would have the further advantage of transferring to their opponents the difficulty with which they were faced that summer in the expiry of the Peace Preservation Act, under which Ireland had been governed since 1882.

It was still open to the Tory leaders to repudiate the responsibility of their parliamentary victory and refuse to take office. That is not a course which is usually held to be either wise or creditable, but the unique position in which they were placed by the suspension of the power of dissolution would have made it justifiable. At least, that was the conclusion to which they came, and to which Lord Salisbury agreed in the conversations which took place between them while the Queen's response to Mr. Gladstone's resignation was being awaited. She was at Balmoral: the resignation had been sent down by messenger, and it was not until Thursday evening, June 11, that Lord Salisbury received by telegram his first summons to undertake the formation of a Ministry. He started northward by the night mail.

He travelled alone, and used to pride himself afterwards on the success with which he had eluded the "touts" who were hot upon his trail from every news office in the kingdom. At the first station at which the train stopped in the early morning, he

slipped out of the sleeping-car into which he had been duly ushered by dignified officials at King's Cross and took refuge in an empty third-class compartment. Keeping himself close he heard, as the day advanced, the footsteps of puzzled pressmen hurrying along beside the train at each stopping-place, and listened with gratified appreciation to their ejaculations of mutual information: "It's evidently a mistake!" "I can't find him anywhere!" "He's certainly not on the train!"

On his arrival at Balmoral the Queen, by his advice, telegraphed a request to Mr. Gladstone to reconsider his decision,—a request, however, which was not backed by any refusal of the Opposition leader to succeed him. It was declined, and when Lord Salisbury left Scotland twenty-four hours later he had resolved upon accepting office. The late Lord St. Aldwyn—Sir Michael Hicks Beach of those days—in some noted recollections which he kindly contributed for the purpose of this book, refers to this change of intention as an instance of the strong personal influence which the Queen exercised over Lord Salisbury. It undoubtedly counted. His feeling for her was at all times imbued with a strong element of protective chivalry. The burden of the witnessed evil which she could not prevent, but for which she felt a sovereign's responsibility, weighed upon her heavily. Now that he had the opportunity of coming to her help, was it possible for him to abandon her?

Such was the substance of her appeal. But it was supported by reasons which affected him with a force quite independent of the person who offered them. Freed at last from constitutional restraints, she was able to make him a full sharer in her inner knowledge of the world situation. The reality surpassed the apprehensions which had been roused in him by

published happenings. Prince Bismarck had been discussing amicably with the French Government proposals for insisting upon the “Europeanising” of Egypt and its removal from England’s exclusive protection. Austria had come to an understanding with her age-long rival, Russia, as to conditions in the Balkan peninsula by which her neutrality would be engaged in the event of a Russian quarrel with England. The latest development was the drawing in of Turkey, our ancient and peculiar ally, to this combination. Russia had been seeking her friendship, had even offered the retrocession of Kars and Ardahan, involving under the terms of the Anglo-Turkish Convention that of Cyprus also. Turkey had appealed to the two German powers for advice, and they had counselled her, in the event of an Anglo-Russian war, to proclaim neutrality and rigidly close the Straits against the fleets of both belligerents,—action which, in the disability inflicted, would have been almost wholly one-sided. Russia had insisted that the prohibition should be more than verbal, and had offered assistance in arming the Straits against the passage of British warships. Turkey was herself actually engaged in preparations for making their defence effective.

Such was the picture which, with more or less precision of detail, was presented to Lord Salisbury in the documents which he found ten days later in Downing Street. In its general outlines it no doubt formed the substance of those Balmoral confidences which caused him to ignore all the arguments which he had found convincing in London. “They [the Liberal Government] have at least achieved their long desired ‘Concert of Europe,’ ” he commented bitterly on his return : “ They have succeeded in uniting the continent of Europe—against England.”



Photo, Elliot & Fry, Ltd.

THE FIRST EARL OF IDDESLIGH
(Sir Stafford Northcote)

On his return south the difficulties which first met him belonged to that category of personal accommodations which he always found more burdensome than the settling of international problems. It was significant of the considerations which had determined his action that, even before leaving Scotland, he had decided, with the Queen's approval, upon the then unprecedented course of combining the Foreign Office with the Premiership, and had telegraphed to Sir Stafford suggesting that he should take the First Lordship of the Treasury. Sir Stafford telegraphed back a startled deprecation of such a breach of the unbroken tradition which assigned that office to the Prime Minister. As soon as he reached Hatfield, Lord Salisbury wrote to explain further :

To Sir Stafford Northcote, June 14, 1885.

“ I shall be in town by eleven—can you come to me at that time ? . . . I should not have created this difficulty by proposing to take the Foreign Office if I had thought that the name of Lytton—the only possible alternative—would have been acceptable to the party and to you. But I do not think that would be the case.

“ I, of course, told the Queen, as I had previously told Ponsonby, that if she preferred that you should form the Government, I should acquiesce very willingly in the arrangement, but that was a matter purely for her independent decision.”

The experience which he had acquired of Lord Lytton's abilities while working with him at the India Office was supplemented by a consciousness of his sympathy with himself in aims and appreciation which would have guaranteed successful co-operation. He was further marked out for the Foreign Office by the fact of having been a diplomat by profession.

But his lack of parliamentary experience proved then and later an insuperable bar to his taking political office.

From Hatfield Lord Salisbury summoned the leading members of his party to meet him the next day in London. Lord Randolph Churchill was included in the invitation, but did not appear. Lord Salisbury telegraphed to the Queen a report of the meeting and its results. After mentioning those who were present:¹ "All except the last two (Sir Michael Hicks Beach and Lord George Hamilton) were of the opinion that it was the duty of the party to take office in case we could obtain from the other side a pledge to support us in winding up the absolutely indispensable business. . . . Beach and Hamilton were against acceptance of office unless we get the consent of Churchill. Churchill will not consent unless Northcote is excluded from the lead and Cross from the Ministry. Some time for negotiation is necessary" (June 15, 1885).

In the rather dry note in which the same afternoon he invited Lord Randolph to join the Cabinet as Indian Secretary these demands were ignored. But they evidently had to be considered. An opening for compromise was offered by a suggestion which had been made that morning, before the meeting, by Sir Stafford himself. His health was not able for a working department in the House of Commons. Instead of the First Lordship there, he should in some ways prefer a Secretaryship of State in the House of Lords. Lord Salisbury decided to adopt this arrangement, insisting at the same time upon the retention of Mr. Cross, and Lord Randolph agreed to the compromise. Unfortunately, however, he had made no secret of his requirements and Sir Stafford had in the interval been

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 607.

informed of them. It was one thing to surrender the Commons' leadership as a step incidentally necessary in the distribution of offices ; it was another to do so at the imperious demand of the man who had constantly rebelled against and insulted him. He wrote asking to be excused from joining the new Cabinet at all.

To Sir Stafford Northcote, June 16, 1885.

“ Your letter is very painful to me—more painful than I can say. I am sure you will believe me when I tell you that *nothing* would have induced me to suggest your leaving the leadership in the Commons if you had not proposed it to me yourself. With that proposal made only yesterday, I came to the conclusion that, in view of the chaos of rivalries and divisions that exist among our men in the House of Commons, it would be better for your own usefulness and peace of mind that your proposal should be acted on. But I repeat that no pressure from any quarter would have induced me to hint at such a course as long as I had reason to believe that it was distasteful to yourself. I should deeply regret it if you adhered to your resolution of to-night. If you think the Colonial Office irksome, take the Presidency of the Council or let us try some other combination. But do not leave us altogether. You place me in the wretched dilemma of either abandoning the Queen in the situation created for her by our action in the Commons, or of seeming to have abandoned or betrayed you—an offence of which my conscience is quite clear.”

There was further correspondence. The Queen came to Lord Salisbury's assistance with a letter of affectionate personal appeal to Sir Stafford, and finally a modification of the first arrangement was reverted to ;—Sir Stafford becoming First Lord of the Treasury and being recognised as the second man in the Ministry with all the minor patronage usually attached to the

Prime Minister's office, but going to the House of Lords as Earl of Iddesleigh. Sir Michael Hicks Beach became leader of the Lower House as Chancellor of the Exchequer.

This incident, though peculiar in its originating cause and the closeness with which it touched him, was typical of similar experiences which on this and on subsequent occasions made the formation of a Ministry a period of acute suffering to Lord Salisbury. Outside the small group which constitutes its central nucleus, it is impossible to fit places and qualifications with any satisfactory exactitude, and the number of those to whose talents or claims the posts offered are actually inadequate is small compared with the number of those who believe them to be so. To disappoint long worked-for and hoped-for ambitions, to inflict upon younger men a mortifying conviction of failure, to announce to older ones the death sentence on careers which have become their life-interest,—these things were an ever-renewed source of moral torture to him. "I feel sore all over," was his groaning comment after a day spent in Ministry making. He was not always prepared for the aspect which his proposals would assume to their recipients, but where he was conscious of the dismay they would cause, his gift of language stood him in good stead. It enabled him to the delicate task of clothing his genuine distress at giving pain in a form acceptable to sensitive pride. Not infrequently letters, admittedly disappointing in their substance, were gratefully acknowledged and the instances where any lasting sense of personal resentment survived were rare. The same sense of style appears in the notes which had the pleasanter function of conveying acceptable propositions. The following is a letter to Sir Henry Holland who joined this Government as Financial Secretary to the Treasury :

To Sir Henry Holland, June 16, 1885.

"Are you disposed to join in our administrative cruise? It may not last long and the weather will be rough, and it is not certainly to be looked upon as a pleasure party. But it will be pleasanter and more profitable if you are with us."

"There are two places, either of which you would fill with great advantage to the party, if you were so disposed,—Financial Secretary to the Treasury—or, if you thought that too hard work, there is the Under-Secretaryship for Foreign Affairs, which is interesting, and the filling of which by a discreet man is of the highest necessity, as of late you must have yourself remarked."

"I will say no more—and only ask you to be favourable to us if you can."

His reluctance to remove older men in favour of rising talent was often charged upon him as a sacrifice of efficiency to personal feelings and the claims of old friendship. There is no denying that he felt strongly the force of such motives, but he always refused to admit that efficiency was sacrificed by yielding to them. Where the pre-eminence of the new claimant was unquestionable it must of course be recognised, but where there was only a shaded difference of degree in parliamentary or administrative talent, he maintained—apart from the intrinsic advantage of securing previous experience—that to disregard the human touch in official relations, to be too ready to sacrifice tried service to the push and clamour of new men on their promotion, was a definite source of weakness to a Government. Loyalty in comradeship was an invaluable asset in promoting smoothness of working in the administrative machine, and in stimulating constancy under strain and corporate courage in the presence of emergencies. His response to Lord

Randolph when—on this occasion—he asked for places for some of his personal followers, though perhaps it had a secondary intention of allusive reproach, was perfectly genuine : “ I quite appreciate your earnestness in the cause of your friends. It is one of the most valuable qualities in a public man ” (*June 16, 1885*).

There was another painful element in the experiences of a Prime Minister on first taking office, which, though it did not strike so deep as the one just discussed, was acutely felt : the close contact with the meaner motives and more sordid aspects of political life into which it brought him. “ The Carlton Club,” he exclaimed, when one of his Ministries was in the making, “ resembles nothing so much at this moment as the Zoological Gardens at feeding time.” Mr. Buckle, who in 1885 was in his early years an editor of *The Times*, has communicated an interesting recollection in this connection. He asked for and obtained an interview with the new Prime Minister, and was received with a cordiality which rather surprised him. Its origin was soon made clear. “ It is a pleasure to see you,” Lord Salisbury exclaimed warmly. “ You are the first person who has come to see me in the last few days who is not wanting something at my hands—place, or decoration, or peerage. You only want information ! ” Then, in a burst of speech unusual in him—the outcome, no doubt, of long-restrained exasperation,—he went on to express the “ surprise and shock ” from which he was suffering. “ Men whom I counted my friends, and whom I should have considered far above personal self-seeking, have been here begging, some for one thing, some for another, till I am sick and disgusted. The experience has been a revelation to me of the baser side of human nature.” Probably most people would feel that the remarkable part of this confession was that, after

twenty years of public life, the experience should have been a revelation to him. Indeed, he never fully assimilated it, and though the element of surprise and shock was lessened on subsequent occasions, it never disappeared. Yet the man in the street regarded him as a cynic, and he himself would have scorned the imputation of expecting too high a standard of motive from his fellows.

The more serious difficulty connected with Irish administration was also faced during this interval. It would be evidently impossible at that period of the session for a Government in a minority to renew the expiring Peace Preservation Act. Lord Salisbury consulted his Irish legal advisers as to the risk of disorder involved. The answer was favourable. The worst symptoms of the outbreak of 1882 had been subdued, and until the result of the approaching elections had been decided it would be in nobody's interest to foment trouble. He therefore determined that the position as towards Ireland constituted no insuperable bar to his acceptance of office, and, after some preliminary bargaining with Mr. Gladstone as to the precise degree of support which his Government was to receive from the Liberal majority in the House of Commons, he kissed hands as Prime Minister on June 24.¹

¹ The 1885 Cabinet numbered thirteen members—Lord Cairns had died in April of pneumonia after a few days' illness:—

<i>Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister,</i>	<i>Colonial Secretary,</i> Colonel Stanley.
Lord Salisbury.	<i>Lord Chancellor,</i> Lord Halsbury.
<i>First Lord of the Treasury,</i> Lord Iddes-	<i>First Lord of the Admiralty,</i> Lord G.
leigh.	Hamilton.
<i>Chancellor of the Exchequer,</i> Sir Michael	<i>Lord Lieutenant,</i> Lord Carnarvon.
Hicks Beach.	<i>Lord President,</i> Lord Cranbrook.
<i>Home Secretary,</i> Sir Richard Cross.	<i>Lord Privy Seal,</i> Lord Harrowby.
<i>War Secretary,</i> Mr. W. H. Smith.	<i>Secretary for Scotland,</i> Duke of Rich-
<i>Indian Secretary,</i> Lord Randolph	mond.
Churchill.	

As regarded practical activities the rest of the session was of necessity uneventful. The approaching elections dominated political interest. The boundaries of constituencies had been so revolutionised as to leave many of them without traditions, and nearly half of the new electorate had never yet given a vote. While the heated controversies of the last few years had intensified party passions, party organisers, deprived of all solid bases for calculation, had become a prey to panic anxieties. This state of feeling acted with complicating effect upon the relations of the Parnellite group to the two English parties. These were in any case abnormal. The assumption of Liberals that their dislike to their own Coercion Acts entitled them to the support of Irish patriots had been entirely repudiated by Mr. Parnell. Whether moved by calculation or by passion or by both, his hostility towards them had steadily increased, and in spite of the fact that the Conservatives had unfailingly voted for the repressive measures to which he objected, his party had supported them during the past year on all non-Irish issues. The enforced truce on the question of coercion enabled him now to threaten the Liberals with an extension of this support to the constituencies. His influence could not, in fact, affect results in more than three or four English and Scottish seats, but the excited state of party nerves endowed his intentions with an exaggerated importance. Mutual suspicions of underground manœuvring became rife in the House of Commons. Conservatives were convinced that it was with the deliberate purpose of transferring the burden of Irish animosity to their opponents' shoulders that Liberals had abstained from the division of June 8, while Liberals, a few weeks later, scented a nefarious intrigue in the language used in the House of Commons by Conservative Ministers.

The occasion was a debate raised by the Irish Members in moving for an enquiry into what was known as the Maamtrasna murder case, in which they had repeatedly alleged a miscarriage of justice. Lord Spencer, advised by his law officers, had refused to reopen the case, and the present Cabinet had come to the same decision. In the previous November, however, Lord Randolph Churchill, then in Opposition, had spoken and voted in support of the Irish view, and on July 15, two days before the debate took place, Lord Carnarvon, the new Lord Lieutenant, received a letter from Sir Michael Beach which made him fear that the enquiry would, after all, be granted. He communicated hurriedly with Lord Salisbury :

To Sir Michael Hicks Beach, July 16, 1885.

“ I gather from a letter from Carnarvon that you are disposed to go back on the decision which the Cabinet took on the Maamtrasna case. I think you ought to consult the Cabinet before doing so. It is not an ordinary matter—for it involves much of our personal honour. I do not speak of our party interests though I think they are materially involved. We shall lose confidence if we seem to allow parliamentary tactics to interfere with the administration of the criminal law.

“ But this is another matter. My principal object in writing is to urge that in justice to Carnarvon—and to all of us—no promise of an enquiry should be given except by consent of the Cabinet.”

Sir Michael acquiesced and the enquiry was in fact refused. But in the debate Lord Randolph took occasion to repudiate all responsibility for Lord Spencer’s administration. Sir Michael spoke more dubiously in the same direction and Mr. Gorst, who was a member of the Ministry though not in the Cabinet, openly attacked the Liberal Viceroy’s action. They were the

only speakers from the Treasury Bench. Orangemen and Liberals were equally scandalised, and the Queen wrote an indignant remonstrance to Lord Salisbury.

To the Queen, July 20, 1885.¹

“Lord Salisbury deeply regrets that anything was said from the Treasury Bench on Friday night which meets with Your Majesty’s disapprobation. He himself read with great regret the speech of the Solicitor-General.² It was discussed in Cabinet yesterday and Sir Michael Beach was requested to remonstrate with that officer upon it. . . . But in judging of Lord Randolph’s speech it is fair to remember that he had, unfortunately, while he was in Opposition, in November last, formed and expressed with great energy the views he expressed last night as to Lord Spencer’s Government. It was, of course, impossible for him to recede from the views so expressed ; the only thing he could do was to reconcile those views with the vote which, as a member of the Government, he gave against the re-opening of the enquiry. Though Lord Salisbury differs from him strongly upon the estimate of past events, he cannot say that according to parliamentary usage Members of the Government can be required to agree as to what took place in the past. They have to agree as to the course to be pursued in the present. The mistake committed was that of Sir M. Beach, who did not see the importance of letting other members of the Government speak as a corrective.

“Lord Salisbury will watch for an opportunity of re-stating, more accurately, the views of the Government on these points. He entirely agrees with Your Majesty in thinking that the Nationalists cannot be trusted ; and that any bargain with them would be full of danger.”

He found the opportunity two days later when he

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 688.

² Mr. Gorst.

took advantage of an Irish debate in the House of Lords to pronounce an elaborate eulogy on the late Viceroy.

It was all a small matter and only requires mention here because the Maamtrasna debate became the most advertised text for an indictment of dishonesty, which was freely urged against the Tory leaders and their chief during the stormy months that followed. It really rested upon wider though less tangible bases. One of these was a feature in the election campaign for which Lord Salisbury undoubtedly shared responsibility. No evidence appeared at the time, and none has ever appeared since, of Parnellite support having been solicited by any of the Conservative leaders,—but that it was not rejected by them is undeniable. They never qualified their well-known views as to the necessity of maintaining order in Ireland or the impossibility of conferring Home Rule upon her, but Mr. Parnell saw to it that no provocative challenge on those points was thrown down to them by word or deed until the elections were over, and they tacitly accepted the proffered truce and were correspondingly reticent of attack upon him and his friends. This reticence was charged against them, and against Lord Salisbury especially, as being discreditable if not dishonest. Keen partisans saw in it evidence of some secret and unprincipled bargain, and even fair-minded opponents argued that, since in the quarrel between Liberals and Irish, the Tories were on the Liberal side, they had no right to profit by it at the elections, even through silence.

Lord Salisbury repudiated the premise upon which this argument was based. He did not admit that he was on the Liberal side in the quarrel. He had urged upon a sometimes laggard Government the necessity of fulfilling its primary function of maintaining order,

and he had supported it in the performance of that function even when, as in the case of the Suspects Act, he wholly disapproved of its methods. But the Liberal administration of Ireland had to be viewed as a whole. For the last eighteen years it had consisted of two interdependent elements. A series of concessions to the demands of agitators, followed invariably by an increase of disorder, had been accompanied by recurrent measures of repression whose description as "coercion" was peculiarly appropriate since they embodied no other idea. They were rarely defended as inculcating upon the public conscience the reverence due to order and constituted authority, or as adaptations of the machinery of criminal law to the social conditions of a people. They were always referred to by their authors as a deplorable resort to mere force, offensive to their own principles, and intolerable except as a temporary expedient. Repression in itself was never agreeable to Lord Salisbury's love of individual liberty. "I cannot agree," he observed on one occasion, "with the view which some of my Orange friends appear to hold, that Coercion is, in and by itself, a faith to live and die for." But repression so approached and so apologised for was wholly offensive to him. In private conversation he did not hesitate to express his sympathy with the state of feeling which this method of government had produced in the Irish leaders. It was, in his eyes, natural and just that such a policy of alternate kissing and cuffing, of punishing the instruments of an agitation which was being simultaneously encouraged by surrender to its demands, should inspire in the subject so treated an extremity of contemptuous resentment. He would never admit that his willingness to profit at the polls by this feeling, or his refusal, by needless provocation, to deflect any part of it on to

the heads of his own party called either for explanation or excuse. The Liberals richly deserved what they had got.

There was another and more solid cause for his opponents' suspicions which did not fully materialise till the following year. Intermediately, the revelation of Mr. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule had made that question the supreme issue between parties, and it was startling to the combatants on either side to discover that Lord Carnarvon, the Lord Lieutenant in this Tory Ministry, had all along privately favoured a Home Rule policy, and that Mr. Parnell, the Nationalist leader, had been made cognisant of the fact. Lord Salisbury, it was felt, could not have been ignorant of his old friend's opinions ; he had deliberately selected him for the Irish Office ; he must have been privy to the enlightening interview which he had had with Mr. Parnell two months afterwards. From these conclusions it was a short step to the assumption of a bargain offered by the Tory to the Irish chief,—a bargain which would have involved Lord Salisbury in alternative charges, alike in baseness. Either he had deliberately planned, in the event of his retention of office becoming dependent on the Irish vote at Westminster, to renounce the policy to which his party had always been pledged and of which he was now one of the most militant defenders, or, with equal falsity, he had tried to purchase the support of Irish Nationalists at the polls by promises which he had never any intention of fulfilling. His own consistent refusal to meet these charges otherwise than by a blank denial calls for greater detail in the establishment of the facts,—so far as the available records permit,—than the intrinsic importance of the episode would justify.

The first necessity is to exercise a certain amount

of historical imagination. To arrive at an accurate judgment of men's attitude in Irish politics before Mr. Gladstone's sudden adoption of Home Rule in 1886, it is essential to realise the revolutionary change in values which that action effected. Lord Salisbury's article on "Disintegration" had been published only two years before. When he argued in it the possibility—though only through slow gradations and in the distant future—of the Liberal party's ultimate consent to the Irish separatist demand, he was accused of trying to make party capital out of a gratuitously invented bogey. There were, no doubt, Radicals in those days who favoured Home Rule for Ireland, just as there were Radicals chargeable with socialistic heresies abhorrent to Mr. Gladstone's soul, and Radicals who advocated Republicanism. But by the bulk of the Liberal party and the whole of its front bench the permanence of the Act of Union as a basic fact in the Constitution was accepted as unquestioningly as by the Tories. "It has transformed a chimera into a burning issue," was the phrase in which Lord Salisbury subsequently described the immediate effect produced by the famous Christmas pronouncement from Hawarden.

But it was not only in its remoteness from practical politics that the reaction of the Home Rule question differed fundamentally before that crucial date from what it became afterwards. The artificial cohesion in argument which controversy engenders was absent. Before issue is closed, men are drawn towards either side of a question for various reasons—which have their appeal, some to one man and some to another. After the decision has been taken and the battle joined, supporting arguments are all endorsed, while opposing considerations, whose existence had been previously recognised, are all ignored. The original and deter-

mining personal factor in Lord Salisbury's opposition to Home Rule was his overmastering sense of an honourable national obligation towards the minorities in Ireland—landholding, Protestant, Loyalist,—who depended on England's protection. Considerations of Imperial security or of Ireland's economic solvency came later. Later also, his resolute indifference to those advantages of popular acquiescence in the administration, or parliamentary convenience at Westminster which at this earlier period would have been admitted as undoubted elements in the problem, though inconclusive ones.

Lord Carnarvon, so far as can be judged from the records left, seems to have started from much the same standpoint as that occupied by Lord Salisbury in his article on "Disintegration." Only, the difficulties in the way of maintaining the Union, which are there pitilessly insisted upon as calling for the steadiest exertion of Imperial resolve for their defeat, weighed upon him with a depression which he was unable to combat. The advent of the County Franchise Bill deepened this depression into something like despair and, during the winter of '84-85, he had given vent to this pessimistic outlook "more than once," we are told, in conversation with his leader.

A letter written in February 1885 gave it definite expression.¹ Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, a distinguished Colonial parliamentarian and an old friend of Lord Carnarvon's, who combined Tory principles in politics with Nationalist opinions on Irish government, had devised a scheme of Home Rule which he believed would satisfy both these standards. Lord Carnarvon pressed it on Lord Salisbury's notice as a counsel of despair rather than as a measure to be desired on its merits. Mr. Gladstone's pernicious land legislation

¹ *Life of Lord Carnarvon*, vol. iii. p. 151.

had deprived Ireland of her natural leaders ; his Franchise Bill was placing in unbalanced power an illiterate peasantry, controlled by agitators and revolutionaries. On present lines, what hope remained in the future for peaceful relations between the two countries or for any tolerable existence for the Loyalist minority ? Lord Salisbury in reply referred to "the interests which we are bound in honour not to abandon" as imposing a condition which both he and his correspondent accepted as immovable, and, after being shown the scheme, dismissed the safeguards provided in it for the minorities as "neither precise nor practicable."¹ Before receiving this final communication, but after some talk on the subject with the writer, Lord Carnarvon had advised Sir Charles Duffy to postpone his activities. Under present conditions "any attempt to settle this controversy would not only be hopeless, but would distinctly prejudice the result."²

These letters and conversations do not appear to have left any impression of definite disagreement behind them. Comparing notes in retrospect, Lord Carnarvon dated his acceptance of Home Rule from his subsequent experience in office in Dublin ; while Lord Salisbury recorded his recollection that, prior to that time, his colleague had been no more than "deeply dissatisfied with the existing state of things" in Ireland. He was hardly less so himself. In his February letter, Lord Carnarvon had complained that he could foresee no prospect under present conditions but a course of continued repression. In "Disintegration" Lord Salisbury had said the same thing almost in the same words. That to the impatience of the one man the idea was intolerable, which, to the other,

¹ *Life of Lord Carnarvon*, vol. iii. pp. 158 and 155. February 10 ; March 21.

² *Ibid.* p. 155. March 16.

served but as a challenge to his fellow-countrymen's steadiness of purpose, represented an essential difference of temperament which had gradually asserted itself through the obscuring tradition of their ancient comradeship.

This difference seems to have issued in a dulling of mutual comprehension. Lord Carnarvon complained a few months later that his chief had been too absorbed in the business of his own department to give full attention to anything outside of it. Lord Salisbury would probably have echoed the complaint as towards the imaginative pre-occupations to which his colleague was subject. The flow of ardently felt conceptions, which the other poured out in conversation, impressed him with little of the seriousness with which they were clothed in the thought of their author. They saw and talked with each other with little less frequency than of old, but their intimacy was not now genuine. It remained on either side as a shell of habit covering no more than a reasoned confidence in each other's solidly estimable qualities.

Still, that confidence remained, and in what was to prove an unlucky moment, Lord Salisbury invited his old comrade to undertake the most difficult and invidious post in the new Ministry. Lord Carnarvon was reluctant to consent on grounds of health and private convenience, and only agreed on the understanding that the appointment was to come to an end automatically at the close of the approaching elections, whatever their result. It may be that this certainty of its expiry before legislative action of any kind became possible helped to still any doubts which the Prime Minister might otherwise have felt as to a future concurrence in Irish policy with his Lord Lieutenant.

At the moment it was the executive functions of

the post that were all important. For the remainder of that year, Ireland—still throbbing from the frenzy of outrage which had torn her three years before—had to be governed by consent,—consent both of Orangemen and Nationalists. It was necessary to find a man whose loyalty and strength of will were beyond dispute, and yet who could be depended upon not to provoke the mutinous elements in the community. Lord Carnarvon's dislike of repression and the catholicity of his social interests, his charm of address and his readiness in the present emergency to test the efficacy of these gifts in Irish administration, would make his appointment a conciliatory one : his unchallenged Toryism, his independence of character, that very stubbornness and unresponsiveness to influence from his surroundings which made him such a bad party man, would make it a safe one. In short, the Prime Minister made his selection along lines already familiar to the Foreign Secretary when choosing an ambassador to a Court with which relations were strained.

The content induced by this purely administrative pre-occupation suffered some early disturbance. The prospect, as viewed from the responsibilities of office, seems to have quickly developed the new Viceroy's doubts as to the possibility of maintaining the legislative Union. Early in July the colleagues had a talk over Irish affairs. Home Rule was mentioned in passing. “I told him,” Lord Salisbury recorded later, “that my objection to Home Rule was so strong that, even if the Conservative party—which I believed to be impossible,—were to adopt it, I never would, under any circumstances, be a member of a Government that proposed it.” Such energy of repudiation suggests that the precedent conversation had been disquieting. A remembered murmur in the family circle must have

belonged to about this date, though it may have been later: "I am not easy about Carnarvon,—he is getting so very 'green'."¹

The appointment justified itself amply for the purpose for which it had been made. The new Viceroy entered valiantly upon the experiment of governing Ireland from a standpoint of sympathetic contact. Crime had so far diminished, he told the House of Lords, that special powers of repression were no longer needed, and he believed that the people would justify the confidence in them which had been shown in allowing these to lapse. He was going to Ireland, he said, with an open mind, "to hear, to question and, as far as possible, to understand" (*Hansard*, July 6, 1885). He carried out this programme by travelling through the country, visiting distressed districts, winning many hearts by his sympathy and personal address. He interviewed local leaders, Nationalist politicians, parish priests, and dignitaries of the Roman Church, by all of whom he was met with reassuring cordiality. Lord Salisbury looked on with a rather dubious interest, willing to see how the experiment would work out, and chaffing his friend across the dinner-table upon his confidence in his powers of "blarney."

But towards the end of the month this personal diplomacy took a more anxious direction. Lord Carnarvon was assured by intermediaries that Mr. Parnell would welcome an invitation to a private conversation and, cheered by his other successes, he resolved to send him one.

His first opening of this project to his chief was by word of mouth. The only record of their subsequent communications on the subject is contained in two of his letters,—one written on July 26 in this summer,

¹ In allusion to the Irish party-colours of orange and green.

to announce from Dublin "that the interview might be looked upon as settled,"¹ and the other written a year later in which some of his recollections on the subject were summarised. Throughout this period of office, Lord Salisbury's letters form but a small fraction of the correspondence,—the Viceroy, as a rule, considerably offering to wait for an answer to his own until their next meeting in London. Unfortunately, his epistolary style supplies very little material for inference as to the mind of his correspondent. Except for occasional references to external circumstance, his letters might be addressed to anyone. The need for self-expression, when his pen was in his hand, appears to have been so strong as to leave no room in his thought for competitive points of view, even where these were known and recognised. Thus, in this letter of July 26, he refers to an alternative direction which *might* be given to the proposed interview; one which would involve an undertaking to make a large, "though not an extreme," measure of Home Rule a Cabinet question in the next Parliament, should the Conservatives obtain a majority there; and the idea is put aside with bewildering detachment: "This last alternative, I certainly do not recommend, for various reasons which will occur to you." One wonders what position among those "various reasons" was occupied by the fact that the person addressed—who was also Prime Minister and the head of the Government—had just before declared in unmistakable language that nothing would ever induce him to consent to such a measure. Phrasing equally inappropriate to its destination is a recurrent characteristic.

But the line which he proposed in effect to follow did not involve any compromise with his chief's

¹ *Life of Lord Carnarvon*, vol. iii. p. 175.

principles. He had determined, he said, to restrict the conversation to the "common-sense" object of finding out what the Irish leader really wished for or would be prepared to accept. He intimated further his purpose of inviting the Irish Chancellor, Mr. Gibson (who had just taken a peerage as Lord Ashbourne), to be present as a third party at the interview: he had already sounded him upon the subject. No record survives as to how or why this arrangement fell through;—Lord Salisbury spoke later of the dismay which filled him when he first realised that it had done so.

The written report of the conversation, which Lord Carnarvon presented to him immediately after it had taken place,¹ shows him to have made its purely personal and private character clear from the outset, and also to have done his best—though not with complete success—to concentrate it upon Mr. Parnell's views and opinions as distinct from his own. In his letter of retrospect (*June 23, 1886*)² he recalls that Lord Salisbury had expressed himself as satisfied with his conduct of the interview "apart from the question of its expediency."³ Criticism on that score may well have been emphatic in the new certainty of the absence of witnesses, but a reference which is made in the same letter to the Prime Minister's attitude beforehand shows that it was not an entirely new development. Judged only on its merits there is no reason to assume that Lord Salisbury would have felt any objection to the meeting. He was not satisfied with things as they were in Ireland; there was still, in that pre-controversial epoch, a field open for various innocuous

¹ *Life of Lord Carnarvon*, vol. iii. p. 178.

² *Ibid.* p. 227.

³ Suggestions have been made as to Lord Salisbury's having been kept in the dark about this interview. He himself always testified to Lord Carnarvon's unreserved candour on the subject.

ventures in propitiation of Irish sentiment ; to investigate the limiting purposes of the most powerful popular leader in the country could be justly claimed as a common - sense proceeding. But the meeting could not be judged only on its merits or apart from the personality of that leader ; from his previous record ; from the atmosphere of sinister suspicion by which he was surrounded ; from the embittering of that atmosphere through the nervous jealousies which his trading use of the votes at his command had engendered in both parliamentary parties. It would be impossible, in any case, not to believe that Lord Salisbury was conscious of the unwisdom of the project from the first, and the single phrase in which Lord Carnarvon deals with the point in his '86 letter is indirectly but conclusively corroborative of that view.

" I informed you of my intended interview with Parnell before it took place, and though you urged me, most properly, to be extremely cautious in all that I might say, you did not as head of the Government interpose to prevent the meeting. I do not say this with the least intention of transferring to you a responsibility which I entirely accept ; I only recall this fact to remind you that in all my relations with you I have been perfectly open and straightforward."

" You did not as head of the Government interpose to prevent the meeting." An acquiescence described in such narrowly negative terms, though, in spite of Lord Carnarvon's magnanimous disclaimer, it establishes his chief's responsibility, is convincing of depreciation expressed and understood.

The sequel is well known. Somebody talked ; probably more than one among those with whom in the course of that summer and autumn Lord Carnar-

von confidentially discussed the ideal bases of Irish government. Underground rumours became rife during the winter ; hints of them appeared in public utterances and in the columns of the less dignified newspapers. They received a startling development in the following June, when Mr. Parnell, two hours before the famous division on Mr. Gladstone's Home Rule Bill, announced to the House of Commons that he had been informed the previous summer by a Minister of the Crown that the Conservative party intended, if they won in the elections, to offer a statutory legislature to Ireland. This statement, made in the absence of the only man who could have answered it directly, and too late for instructed contradiction or correction, was so manifestly intended to spread panic among the Liberal seceders by its revelation of Tory treachery that it defeated its own object and had no effect on the division. Lord Carnarvon at the next meeting of the House of Lords, on June 10, gave an account of the interview, which was in direct contradiction to its essential charge. It was Mr. Parnell's share in the discussion which had counted ; his had been that of an enquirer, and he did not admit, even on his own account, any such definite commitment, as had been suggested. But what he categorically denied was that he had ever allowed it to be inferred that he spoke with the authority of his Government. Mr. Parnell replied in a letter to *The Times*, but without withdrawing the charge. The contradiction was too direct for explanation, and in the absence of other evidence the verdict had to rest upon the relative credibility of the two witnesses,—as to which there could be no dispute except from the narrowest prejudgment of partisanship. The circumstances under which the "revelation" had been made of an admittedly confidential conversation between two

gentlemen were in themselves conclusive on such an issue.

That Lord Salisbury must have sanctioned this interview and was thereby involved in the suspicions which it aroused was a conclusion at once insisted upon by his opponents. Lord Carnarvon wrote, at first briefly on June 18,¹ and then at length, in the letter which has been already quoted from, to urge publication of the facts. There was nothing in them, he said, which could injure the reputation of either. Lord Salisbury, in replying to the first appeal, said that if there was to be publication he should be bound to protect himself by stating the "very strong language" in which at the outset of the Ministry he had explained to his colleague his inability, under any circumstances, to join in proposing an Irish legislature, and "I need hardly enlarge upon the embarrassment which would result." Lord Carnarvon saw no difficulty : "I readily admit that you have been quite consistent in your objections to Home Rule or whatever may be included under that elastic word. I think, indeed, on referring to my journal, that I can identify the particular conversation to which you allude." He, on the other hand, ever since he had become acquainted with the practical administration of Ireland, had never disguised from his chief his conviction that an indefinite continuation of the present system was impossible, and that very large changes in the powers of self-government there were necessary. He proposed, if Lord Salisbury consented, to state publicly that he had acquainted him with the fact of the interview, and, to add further, "that though I formed the opinion that a certain amount of self-government might be safely and advantageously given to Ireland, you did not concur in that opinion and

¹ *Life of Lord Carnarvon*, vol. iii. pp. 226-27.

consequently no proposal was ever brought by me before the Cabinet" (*June 23, 1886*). He closed with a repetition of his earlier sensitive repudiation of a wish to shift any part of his responsibility on to his correspondent.

To Lord Carnarvon, June 27, 1886.

"I must have expressed myself very ill if I appeared to imply that you were seeking to transfer your own responsibility to me or anyone else—for that is the last imputation that anyone would think of making against you. But my objections to entering on the dangerous path of Cabinet revelations do not arise from that apprehension—and they are unabated. I should probably individually so far gain by them, that, if all I had said was known, no one could suggest that I coquettled with Home Rule. But I object to them because they are certain to give rise to innumerable misconstructions which would affect us all, and because, by entering a Cabinet, we mutually engage to maintain the confidential character of our communications. What you tell me of what you had thought of saying confirms my view of the difficulty of bringing our recollections into harmony at this distance of time. I should have said that at the time of Parnell's visit you had *no* formed opinions as to any change in the mode of Irish Government; though you were deeply dissatisfied with the existing state of things. I could not, therefore, then have brought anything before the Cabinet, because there was nothing to bring before them. Your views hardened later—and you mentioned the matter to the Cabinet, I think, early in November—and you were met by a strong expression of dissent from two or three members—and the subject dropped—and I think was not resumed. All this could not be explained without the risk—almost the certainty—of a different version of the facts presenting itself to the minds of some of our colleagues.

" If a conversation is to be repeated, it should be recorded. If it is not recorded, it should not be repeated.

" I think, therefore, we should be contented with contradicting Parnell's lies—and abstain from disclosing any communications that have passed between us."

The rule laid down in the penultimate paragraph of this letter will be generally accepted as a sound one. But adherence to it on this occasion exposed the writer to a prolonged campaign of misrepresentation closely affecting his personal honour. For many years it became a commonplace of Radical oratory to proclaim as a proved fact that, had the elections of '85 been more favourable than they were to the Tory party, its chief had determined to repeat the procedure of 1867 and secure a parliamentary majority by "dishing the Whigs" over Home Rule. Lord Carnarvon's statement in the House of Lords had sufficiently contradicted this charge, but, if his evidence were ignored and certain cynical assumptions allowed, an arguable case for it undoubtedly remained. Mr. Parnell's statement was false, but the facts to which it gave publicity were true. The Tory Lord Lieutenant had *not* agreed with the unqualified resistance to Home Rule to which his party were pledged, and the Home Rule leader *had* been made privy to the fact. This double revelation posed an immediate question as to the part played by the Prime Minister, who had been both responsible for the Lord Lieutenant's appointment and cognisant of the interview. It was not surprising if partisanship, even though without warrant of evidence, answered the question according to its wishes. What was remarkable was that suspicions, so plausibly grounded and so vehemently urged, should have created so little reaction of distrust among Lord

Salisbury's own following. He took no real steps to avert such distrust. His curt denial of disloyalty, backed by no argument or explanation or disclosure of corroborative circumstance, had indeed more the quality of a challenge than a defence. But it was accepted by his party without question or hesitation, and, so far as has ever appeared, with unanimity. Instead of shaking his authority, this incident became, in fact, a testing proof of the solidity of personal confidence upon which it already rested.

Confidence, however, does not exclude criticism. Since double-dealing was barred as an explanation, errors of judgment had the more to be admitted. It is difficult in retrospect to judge of the original imprudence of Lord Carnarvon's appointment apart from its results. If Mr. Gladstone had not found salvation in Home Rule six months later, or if the Lord Lieutenant's views had not so rapidly crystallised nor been so frankly discussed in conversation, no evil would have accrued from it. Lord Salisbury's failure to anticipate either of these complicating circumstances calls for no particular comment. His failure to forbid the Parnell interview, while conscious of its inexpediency, stands on a different footing. It belonged to an acceptance of independence in his colleagues which was largely inherent in his character, though he would have defended it on grounds of administrative efficiency. His general attitude towards ministerial relationships will be discussed in the next chapter. It need only be noted here that, while it may be contended that in this instance the reasons for departing from his ordinary practice should have been conclusive, the personal difficulty in doing so was peculiar. Even had his temper been more autocratic than it was, it would not have been easy for him, by a mere act of authority,

to override the departmental decision of his oldest friend in politics, a man with whom he could look back to thirty years of common activities on a status of equality which had only come to an end two short months before.

CHAPTER VI

AS PRIME MINISTER

LORD SALISBURY's three offers to relinquish the Premiership when it was already in his hands,—this summer in Sir Stafford Northcote's favour and twice subsequently in Lord Hartington's,—were often applauded as examples of self-sacrifice. They were doubtfully entitled to that eulogy. He made them on disinterested grounds at what he believed to be the call of private loyalty or public duty, and their sincerity was not affected by the improbability of their acceptance. But, in fact, he would have greeted such acceptance with positive satisfaction. This indifference to the highest prize of a political career was not because he was without ambition, but because his ambition was of a fastidious quality. He understood the wish for power ; he never spoke otherwise than respectfully of the distinction which crowns achievement ; but the distinction which accompanies the appearance of power independently of its reality was more than indifferent to him—it was positively repellent. “The love of sham power for the mere show of it is one of those failings whose baseness is out of all proportion to its guilt,”¹ he had written in his trenchant youth, and throughout his life it was a recurrent subject of complaint that the power enjoyed as the crown of political success is essentially a sham.

¹ *Quarterly Review*, October 1869, p. 553.

The chief of a parliamentary Ministry pursues his purpose through a continuous sequence of compromise: with his fellow-counsellors before his projects can find birth at all; with the capacity of ignorance for misconstruction before they can be presented for public approval; with the pressure of conflicting commitments and interests and ideals on the part of his supporters till finally, in an already hardly recognisable form, they are submitted across the table of the House to criticism and amendment at the hands of his opponents. Seen in the light of this reality, the apparent supremacy of a Prime Minister became, in his eyes, a distasteful irony.

On the other hand, for reasons that will be considered in the next chapter, the Foreign Secretaryship made an invincible appeal to him, and when his pre-eminence as a party leader compelled his acceptance of the Premiership, he chose the only way of satisfying the double call by combining two offices, which had hitherto been regarded as incompatible.

His action in doing so was criticised. Mr. Gladstone, in particular, maintained that the fulfilment of a Prime Minister's responsibilities was physically impossible for a man burdened with the heavy work of the Foreign Office. He no doubt measured these responsibilities by his own experience, which in one respect was markedly different to anything called for from Lord Salisbury. He not only initiated the series of "heroic" measures with which his Premierships are associated, but, for the most part, worked them out himself in full detail, and argued their defence, clause by clause, through all the stages of their passage through the House of Commons. The labour involved, though more intermittent, must have been comparable in bulk to that of the most exacting department.

Lord Salisbury was debarred from competing in such labour both by circumstance and character. Legislative work could never have occupied so large a share of his time as it does with a Commons' Prime Minister. But, further, he was by temperament and opinion incapable of becoming a great law-maker. He did not believe in any good to be effected by "inspired" ventures in legislation. Legal provision had to be made for the accommodation of existing institutions to the constantly changing economic and social condition of the people; practical evils had to be remedied as they appeared; insistent demands for change had to be met because more harm would arise from ignoring than from complying with them. But he would have maintained that the most certain characteristics of "large conceptions" in law-making were their disregard of justice and individual liberty, or their sacrifice of realities to the symmetry of cherished theories. He could never have initiated them,—resistance was his normal reaction to them. "I reckon myself," he once said, "as no higher in the scale of things than a policeman—whose utility would be gone if the workers of mischief disappeared."

He did not ignore the claims of the more pedestrian type of legislation referred to. He shared, as head of the Government, in decisions as to the measures to be introduced and as to the principles which they should embody. There are among his papers initialled memoranda dealing with Bills under discussion; draft clauses in his handwriting; suggestions for proposed legislation which he is circulating for his colleagues' opinion. These activities appear sometimes in the midst of acute international crises, and are interesting for the capacity for mental detachment which they reveal. But, in themselves, they are few and slight and, when all is said, the share which

the devising of laws had in his public life was a very small one. There is no evidence upon which he can be credited with the paternity of any measure introduced while he was Prime Minister. For this the double office may be held to have been in part responsible, at least negatively. A more vigorous initiative would have been more congruous to his character. This was curiously shown in connection with two Bills which were introduced by his opponents, and with which he had, therefore, no direct call to concern himself. The substantial part which he actually took in shaping both the Housing and the Redistribution Acts of 1885 was in each case due, in the first instance, to the aggressive insistence with which he pressed forward his already prepared views upon their subject-matter. Yet there were projects which he certainly favoured, and from time to time advocated in his speeches, which, in fact, never materialised in legislation throughout all his years of office. Had his energies, already forbidden to expend themselves in House of Commons' leadership, been also unclaimed by departmental work, they must perforce have been devoted to such matters if only in default of other outlet. How far his country or his reputation would have gained by the exchange is another matter.

It was also maintained that his retention of the Foreign Office interfered with what should be the central responsibility of Premiership—the control of his Cabinet. In so far as this referred to a supervision of the departmental and administrative work of its individual members, no freedom from other occupation would have induced him to embark on it as a

normal function of his office. His often expressed conviction as to the necessity of a single inspiration for efficiency jumped too closely with his innate aversion from interference with other men's jobs. On the occasion of the Parnell interview, he carried this aversion too far. But, in a general way, it would be easy to over-emphasise his singularity in this respect. His detachment was, as a whole, no greater than that to which all Prime Ministers are compelled under modern conditions. The ubiquitous supervision traditionally associated with the office has become obsolete. Even in the closing years of last century the field of administrative activity was already too large for a single individual to take cognisance of. It has since become, if all reports be true, too large for effectual control even by departmental chiefs. Bureaucracy is not an optional issue of the increase of State intervention in the domestic affairs of the community.

But, whether or no his double office interfered to any measurable degree with his opportunities for departmental supervision, it could hardly have affected the more important matter of Cabinet direction. In counsel, it must always take less time to insist on one's own way than to seek methods of accommodating it to the views of others. Any lack of self-assertion which Lord Salisbury displayed in this field must be charged to causes personal to himself. Lord St. Aldwyn, in his noted recollections, contrasts his attitude in both connections with that of Lord Beaconsfield :

“ Certainly, as Prime Minister he did not exercise the control over his colleagues, either in or out of the Cabinet, that Lord Beaconsfield did. . . . Lord Beaconsfield kept a watchful eye on all his colleagues. . . . Lord Salisbury left them very much to themselves unless they consulted him. . . . I have known Lord Beaconsfield enforce his own view on the Cabinet

after all its members but one had expressed a different opinion: Lord Salisbury frequently allowed important matters to be decided by a small majority of votes, even against his own opinion."

He would have defended this attitude as being accurately constitutional. The Cabinet, in his view, was the unit of government, the centre of responsibility, the source of policy: the Prime Minister was only the first among equals in carrying out its decisions. Both in his private letters and in his public speeches this position is invariably adhered to. He never speaks of a view taken, a decision adopted, a policy to be pursued, as being his own—it is always "the Cabinet's." If writing to a colleague about some proposed action to which he objects, his normal expression of dissent is to say that "it must be referred to Cabinet." In a letter written in 1878 to Lord Carnarvon, which has been published in an earlier volume of this book,¹ he insisted on this view very definitely. He was trying to dissuade him from resigning office on account of a condemnation which Lord Beaconsfield had passed on one of his speeches. Apart from other grounds of objection, he insisted that to resign for such a reason would be putting the Prime Minister in a position that he did not rightfully hold; the expression of his sentiments, unless endorsed by his colleagues, could not be made a ground for leaving a Government; Ministers were members of a Cabinet, not servants of the Premier. He himself acted on this principle when he successfully resisted Lord Beaconsfield's policy in the summer of '77, and he remained faithful to it when, as Prime Minister, the relative position was reversed.

This habitual repudiation of autocratic claims was

¹ See Vol. II. pp. 173-74.

an undoubted note of his Premiership, and others of those who worked under him would have agreed with Lord St. Aldwyn in looking upon it as a defect. It would be difficult and not fruitful to trace its operation in detail. Devoted personal adherents used to dwell indignantly upon opportunities lost because he did not insist upon having his own way. A notable instance will be seen in the circumstances in which this short Ministry came to an end in the early months of 1886.¹ But it would no doubt be equally possible to point to instances in which his acquiescence in other men's views proved fortunate in the event. Principles of administration cannot be judged by a balancing of the results which fortuitously accompany them.

But if the defect charged against him amounted to an abdication of direction, it was undoubtedly a serious one. Unity of aim may be assumed in a Cabinet formed under the party system ; unity of opinion is an unattainable ideal in any group of intelligent men ; it is the enacting link of unity of decision under these conditions whose achievement becomes the criterion of efficiency. Divided counsels, with the capriciousness, the delay, and, ultimately, the paralysis which they entail upon action, are the worst disease from which a Cabinet can suffer. And some degree of single individual direction is the only guarantee of their avoidance. Did Lord Salisbury's compliancy amount to the withdrawal of such direction ?

The tree is known by its fruits. Judged by results, his methods will well bear comparison with the more autocratic tradition of his two immediate predecessors. Differences of opinion occurred in his Cabinets ; but they never paralysed action as they did in Lord Beaconsfield's Cabinet in '77-'78, or in Mr. Gladstone's in its dealings with Egypt in the eighties. Nor did

¹ See Chapter IX. pp. 285-87.

conflict crystallise into the permanent cleavage that was endemic in the Ministries of the latter statesmen. In one instance only, during the thirteen and a half years of his Premiership, did it culminate in secession: it is doubtful whether any system of Cabinet management could have overcome Lord Randolph Churchill's innate incapacity for a subordinate position. For the rest, his colleagues differed from time to time on specific issues, but their differences were argued and finally accommodated without obstructing executive activity or leaving behind any legacy of antagonism. This was not due to the absence of strong personalities among them, nor,—especially after the Liberal Unionist accessions,—to any inherent incapacity for quarrelling which they owned. There is one notable instance which can be pointed to. Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain served together under three Prime Ministers. Under Mr. Gladstone their mutual opposition was so violent as to break through all discreet restraint and be advertised in their platform speeches; under Mr. Balfour it culminated in secession on both sides; under Lord Salisbury the two men worked together in effectual amity for six years. Indeed, after Lord Randolph's departure, the inner history of his Cabinets became dully lacking in critical moments.

Such results, though he proved them compatible with a minimum of self-assertion, cannot be accounted for by mere passivity. An actively controlling force, effective in its unifying power, must have been at work. In what did it consist, and how did it operate?

In the first place, the charge of undue self-effacement in counsel must be accepted with qualifications. He was not autocratic, but it is impossible to read his correspondence without recognising that his temper was essentially authoritative. Upon his depart-

mental staff, and indeed upon the whole official permanent service, its operation was direct and never questioned. His conduct of the quarrel with the National Union in 1884 instanced its instinctive and successful display in the face of a revolting party organisation. Towards his colleagues it was probably never consciously asserted,—but its existence could hardly have been ignored by them. If they, or the majority of them, differed from him, he deliberately yielded: their responsibility was equal with his, and they had a right to their own opinions. But, as one reads, one feels that habitually they preferred not to differ from him.

This instinctive claim to authority was, of course, most readily deferred to in the affairs of his own department. In 1886, it is true, Lord Randolph experimented in an independent foreign policy. But it was only for a few weeks and while Lord Iddesleigh was Foreign Secretary. In this Ministry of '85 he claimed, as Indian Secretary, a right of consultation on Central Asian negotiations, and Lord Salisbury communicated with him freely upon the subject. But when he proposed, further, to make a third at interviews with the Russian Ambassador, his chief declined without phrases, and the suggestion was not again heard of. Decisions of foreign policy were frequently discussed in Cabinet; the necessity of deferring to its independent judgment was a plea constantly urged by Lord Salisbury in his conversations with foreign diplomats. But the occasions when his views were ultimately disputed by it must have been very rare.¹

Then, the fact that his veto was rarely asserted did not mean that his right to its exercise was aban-

¹ Only one such—on a minor issue—can be traced in this and the succeeding Ministry. (See Chapter V., Vol. IV.)

doned. Questions upon which he was known to be immovable—as, for instance, in his refusal to have the fiscal issue raised in Parliament—were by that very circumstance excluded from Cabinet discussion. There were unprepared-for occasions, few and far-between, when a final opposition had to be resolved on, and its resolution would take a characteristic form. “I shall tell them that if they insist on such-and-such, they must find another Prime Minister,” was an announcement of purpose typically phrased. As a formula of resistance this had the advantage of discouraging attempts to test its strength. “I am your leader, and therefore you must do as I wish,” may provoke insistence on the chance that, when it comes to the point, the challenger may yield rather than cease to be leader: “You have a full right to your opinions, and therefore, since I cannot do as you wish, you had better let me go,” deprives such a venture of all possibility of success.

But there is no record of such ultimatums having ever been actually called for. To account for the smooth working of the machine it is not necessary to weigh Lord Salisbury’s latent powers of self-assertion against his reluctance to make use of them. It is simpler to recall the qualities which obtained him his reputation in diplomacy and which were equally available for Cabinet management. The atmosphere of security which was induced by the solidity of his purposes, his avoidance of “bluff,” his fidelity to even implied obligations, was as creative of confidence in the one department as in the other. The instinct for proportion which distinguished *ab initio* between objects for insistence and objects for compromise was as effectual in economising influence in counsel as it was in negotiation; the capacity for a detached recognition of points of view not his own, the resource-

fulness in expedients of accommodation, served him as well with the diverse temperaments on his own front benches as it did with the conflicting demands of foreign statesmen. Diplomatic and administrative ability are not convertible terms. More than one successful diplomatist has proved useless in government; many of the great administrators of history, armed with autocratic or military power, have had no use for diplomatic methods. It was rather a specific characteristic of Lord Salisbury's to have united the two functions,—to have brought to foreign affairs the tolerant outlook of a ruler recognising among fellow-rulers, even of alien communities, the common bond of trusteeship for national interests, and in directing the machinery of government at home, to have preferred dependence on agreement rather than on submission.

We cannot fill in the picture in detail. The results are there, and we can interpret them in the light of faculties displayed in other connections. But material for illustrating our thesis by supporting instances is all but lacking. There are among Lord Salisbury's papers occasional letters and private memoranda dealing with Cabinet business which display the same characteristics as are familiar in his diplomatic correspondence. But, as must always be the case, the bulk of his communications with his colleagues was informal, intimate, and unwritten. For instance, we can do little more than guess at the services rendered in counsel by his sense of humour—a quality at least as effectual for pacification as for controversy. His own verbal references to episodes of ruffled temper in Cabinet enabled one to picture the touch of demure irony, the suggestive epithet or allusion interjected into the midst of an irritated discussion which had power to recall overstrained nerves to a realisation

of forgotten proportion. His mockery, lightly touched, and including himself among its objects, could force a truce of smiles, however reluctantly, upon the most heated combatants.

His personal relations with his colleagues, outside the walls of the council room, were marked by an even friendliness. The degree of intimacy varied, but, in schoolboy phrase, Ministers all "knew each other at home,"—Lady Salisbury assisting actively in this consummation. The remoteness, of which he was sometimes accused, towards the outer circle of his supporters would certainly not have been re-echoed by his colleagues. His door, like that of most public men, was closed to ordinary visitors who came without previous appointment. But a rule was specifically laid down for his household that it was to be open at all hours to any member of the Cabinet, young or old, who sought admittance. While the session was in progress, he was practically in daily communication with the House of Commons' leader, either personally or by letter; with other Ministers according to the business going forward. The burden varied with individuals. During Lord Randolph's brief lieutenancy it was serious; his eager mentality and demand for sympathetic hearing was as clamorous for attention as the differences, which were constantly calling for adjustment, between him and his colleagues. "Always accessible and responsive" was the account of Lord George Hamilton, a junior member of the Cabinet who had served with him earlier as under-secretary; and others of the same standing have left a similar record. "Sometimes kindly sarcastic, but always frank and fair and patient—though easily bored" is Lord St. Aldwyn's description of intercourse with him. He adds a comment upon one of his characteristic tricks: "There was no excuse for

boring him, as he always showed it at once by ‘wagging’ his leg. I often wondered whether the ambassadors ever took the hint.” The signal, well known to his family, indicated absent-mindedness rather than boredom; thought sent on its travels by some suggestion contained in his companion’s talk; a symptom of fruitful mental activity, though embarrassingly detached from its immediate inspiration. A pause so occupied would be broken by a satisfied announcement of a problem of conduct solved, or a sought-for explanation found. He was a great fidget. One habitual trick he had which was not popular with his neighbours. Raising his heels from the ground as he sat, he would establish a sustained quivering of his knees and legs, continuing perhaps for half an hour at a time, shaking the whole floor of the room and making the furniture rattle. His colleagues on the front bench in the House of Lords complained that it made them seasick. Even when his limbs were at rest his hands were not,—his long, rather rugged fingers incessantly twisting and turning a paper-knife or penholder, or beating a devil’s tattoo upon his knee or the elbow of his chair.

The confidence he roused among those with whom he worked became, as years advanced, axiomatic in its completeness. The stability of his judgment and his disinterested inspiration grew, in his colleagues’ eyes, to be facts as fundamental and unnoted as the law of gravity. Trust begat loyalty, and among those with whom he was associated for any length of time, loyalty warmed into genuine affection. Of the expressions of this that are upon record we may again quote Lord St. Aldwyn’s, both because it is not uncritical and because it comes from a man who was never accused of overcomplaisance: “It is rare to get a letter from Beach without a ‘No, I will not’”

on the first page," was Lord Salisbury's comment on the militant independence of this colleague.

"After Lord Beaconsfield's death I became more intimate with Lord Salisbury, and always regarded him rather than Sir S. Northcote as the future head of the party; and his character soon inspired me with a real affection for him. He never thought of himself, and his kindness to his colleagues was unbounded, especially in any trouble, as when my health broke down in 1887. . . . In my opinion his record as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary would have gained if his nature had been harder and more self-assertive,—but this might probably have detracted from his personal charm which is no small asset in the conduct of affairs. . . . Never thinking of his own position or courting popularity, he devoted himself, often at the sacrifice of his own opinions and inclinations, in the true spirit of duty, to 'carrying on the Queen's Government.' All who worked with him felt that he was essentially a great man."

The special circumstances of the time, and, to a degree, his own limitations, made the harmony, whose causes we have been trying to identify and which, however induced, was so pre-eminent a characteristic of Lord Salisbury's Cabinets, an asset of peculiar importance to his leadership. Parliamentary conditions were not easy during his two long Ministries. That of 1886–92 held office in a minority, depending for its support in the House of Commons upon men who were admittedly outside its party organisation. In 1895 this unstable relation was merged into a formal Coalition which, if the emergency combinations which administered the country during the Great War be excluded, can claim to have been the only successful Government of its kind that is recorded in parliamentary history. The distinction between Conservatives and, at all events, the Whig section of

their Liberal Unionist allies, was no doubt largely conventional. But it existed; and until coalescence had solidified into unity, the Conservative party, while maintaining its own fundamental characteristics, was subject to the constant strain of assimilating new blood, new points of view, new traditions. It was a condition productive of unrest, begetting a spirit of adventure among the younger members of the party, and suspicion among the older. The traditional homogeneity, upon which opponents had been wont to dwell enviously, was broken. Not only had the three streams flowing from separate sources,—Conservatives, old Whigs, and Radical Imperialists,—to be conducted along one channel, but the channel itself was no longer even, and minor insurgent currents,—of Jingoism, of Fair Trade, of Tory Democracy,—were constantly pressing against the banks of party discipline at Westminster.

Lord Salisbury was not well equipped for dealing directly with such conditions. He was not a House of Commons' leader either actually or by innate capacity. The unbroken support which his Governments, in fact, received from the Commons' majorities, throughout his period of Premiership, can best be accounted for by the indirect action of his twofold gift for popular leadership and Cabinet management. The parliamentary unity of the party was preserved under a double pressure; the pressure from below of a constantly convinced and trusting electorate, and the pressure from above of a unanimously loyal front bench.

As Lord Salisbury conducted it, the maintenance of personal communication with the Sovereign was

by no means a negligible item in the Prime Minister's duties. To a sympathetic enquiry, addressed to him this autumn, as to how he bore the strain of his double department, he replied : " As for that, I could do very well with two departments ; in fact, I have four,—the Prime Ministership, the Foreign Office, the Queen, and Randolph Churchill,—and the burden of them increases in that order." In spite of the inevitable gibe, he could not fairly complain of the volume of his correspondence with Her Majesty, great though it undoubtedly was, for his whole attitude invited and encouraged it. His relations with her counted for so much, in his personal as well as in his official life, that they call for some detailed comment.

Loyalty to the Sovereign was with him more than a sentiment. He would have placed it upon the same level of obligation as patriotism. His reason corroborated what his instincts impelled him to ; he believed the monarchy to be indispensable to the Empire, and its continued credit the only certain guarantee of the country's stability. He held it as a paramount duty to maintain its prerogatives, and would gladly have seen them extended had that been possible. In his younger days, he used to lament that he had not been born under a more actively monarchial constitution ; he should have far preferred service to a king than to a parliament. In later years this lament was more rarely heard,—partly, perhaps, because of a more intimate knowledge of what the Ministers of absolute monarchs, even the great Bismarck himself, had to submit to in the frustration of their policies.

The claims upon him which he recognised in his Sovereign did not include the surrender of his judgment. This was frequently exemplified in contentions over minor issues during the long period of their official relations, and for some years after he first became a

Cabinet Minister his attitude, both in foreign and in ecclesiastical politics, was in direct opposition to the Queen's views. But when he became Foreign Secretary in 1878, the antagonism which Russia's challenging policy had induced in him, and still more, perhaps, his championship against Lord Derby's passivity, gave a favourable opening to their new and closer relations. From that date intimacy between them grew steadily and not slowly. From the very first his work at the Foreign Office seems to have won from the Queen a confidence which never subsequently weakened : on his side, he became rapidly imbued with that personal affection for her which it was her unique distinction to have aroused in every one of her Prime Ministers, irrespective of their sympathy with her opinions.

What qualities in her were responsible for it in Lord Salisbury's case it is difficult to state with absoluteness. He was not given to the description or analysis of his feelings, especially when these were, as in this case, deeply involved. The quality to whose attraction he most often referred was her loyalty, her white truth, and honesty. "Always speak the truth to the Queen," was his only advice to those who approached her for the first time. She was absolutely to be relied on in all circumstances,—no trust in her would ever be betrayed. Her candour was as noticeable as her loyalty ; she was incapable of even the subtlest form of pose or affectation or vanity. And on the other hand, the offence which she found it hardest to pardon was any attempt to deceive or conceal things from her.

This pervading truthfulness of nature was not only sympathetic to him in itself, but it exercised a favourable influence over all their relations, private and public. It induced in him that freedom of personal

confidence which is peculiarly refreshing to men of reserved tempers : Lady Salisbury used to affirm her belief that he told the Queen “ everything.” It was an essential condition of the trust which he reposed in her as confidante and ally in his work as Foreign Minister. It assisted his sympathies where otherwise they might have failed. The long mournings and the ritual of anniversaries by which she expressed her love and sorrow for her dead relations were frankly incomprehensible to him. If there had been a trace of self-consciousness to lower them into a parade of feeling, they would have been repellent. As it was, her invincible genuineness secured them from criticism. He would demurely ask for assistance from her household in remembering the periods of mourning or the “ forbidden days,” but they created no obstacle to the pity which he felt for her in the series of bereavements which crowded her later years, or to the appeal which her strong family affections made to his kindred feeling. She was herself, indeed, uncompromising in denouncing any detected artificiality of sentiment.

Then again, she had peculiarities calculated to make a disturbing appeal to his sense of humour : eccentricities of outlook upon art and literature, dating for the most part from the bygone traditions of the middle of that century, which her social isolation had prolonged in her ; irrational prejudices in matters of everyday life ; queerly distorted perspectives. Her letters, reflecting with accuracy, and with no attempt at adjustment for the sake of effect, the interests, small and great, which happened to occupy her mind at the moment, presented at times an extraordinary jumble of values. Lord Salisbury was perpetually amused, but his amusement was quite singleminded. There was no suspicion of pretension

to excite his easily stirred irony or make his laughter a challenge to his respect.

There were other characteristics in her to make respect easy. Her inflexible conscience, her unflagging industry, her high standard of public morality, in which the watchwords of duty, truth, and honesty, stood sternly in the forefront. There was a satisfying oneness of judgment between them on all questions of personal ethics in public life. Restrictions of loyalty and honour needed scarcely to be referred to with her,—never to be argued : he was certain beforehand of her understanding and agreement. His only difficulty on this score was her too emphatic condemnation of laxer conceptions in others. When she had become convinced of personal falsity in some foreign sovereign or statesman, her Minister had more than once to exert his influence actively to persuade her to a politic external tolerance.

In spite of gossip to the contrary, she had a larger charity towards offences against the laws of sexual morality, and one which responded to Lord Salisbury's own attitude. It was not sentimental, and admitted of no blurring of outlines ; but it refused individual judgment, and expressed itself in a cool objective recognition of human infirmity. The rigid exclusion from her Court which she meted out to open offenders in this connection was a function of her office, not an outcome of her impulses. She held herself to be the guardian of social purity, as her judges were of civil law, and optional exceptions on the grounds of compassion would have been, in her eyes, as much out of place in the one instance as in the other. Lord Salisbury always strenuously denied that she had in her any trace either of Pharisaism or Puritanism.

On Church questions their standpoints were widely different. Hers, derived from her early training and

her husband's teaching, was reminiscent of the devout but rather hazy movement in Germany, out of which the Evangelical State Church of Prussia had arisen in the middle of the nineteenth century. With careful candour she often took occasion in conversation to allude to her disagreement with her Minister's well-known views. Doctrines or discipline which marked separation between Christian bodies would be swept aside, in characteristic phrase, as "very unnecessary." And, in truth, her simple and complete acceptance of the fundamental articles of the Christian creed made such differences of small account in personal intercourse. The two never discussed theology ; they agreed to differ on Church polity ; and they were always in religious sympathy.

As a collaborator in his own particular business of foreign affairs, he continually affirmed her value. Her unrivalled experience in all the intricacies of international affairs, made presently available by her remarkable memory, was interpreted in the light of a strong common sense. Lord Salisbury used to express his approval, ungallantly, by saying that talking over public affairs with her was like talking with a man. She had certain strong partialities and antagonisms, but they did not cover a large field. The most prominent was her dislike and distrust of Russia. This sentiment dated probably from the time of the Crimean War, but it was being continually reinforced to the Queen's militant truthfulness by the unveiled audacity of falsehood which characterised Government methods in Russia. Lord Salisbury did not dispute the phenomenon, though he attributed it largely to the incoherence of the administrative machine under its overburdened autocrat. The assurances of one Russian representative would be immediately falsified by the acts of another, simply because each was pur-



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QUEEN VICTORIA

From a photograph by W & D. Downey, Ltd

suing his own separate policy, and there was no central authority strong enough to control them.

Since, throughout this period, these policies varied only in the degree of their antagonism to England, the strength of the Queen's feelings on the subject formed no direct stumbling-block to her Minister. In 1886 he had to demur to her exaggerated championship of Bulgaria in its resistance to Russia, and his subsequent efforts to appease the traditional hostility of the northern Empire did not commend themselves to her. But he found reasoning with her a satisfactory process, even when it failed to persuade. Her judgment, when aroused, acted dispassionately and on large lines ; she did not adhere to opinions simply because she had expressed them, or refuse to admit conviction when it came. And, above all, there were no secondary motives, no hidden or half-conscious purposes to stumble against in the darkness.

There was one department of knowledge in which her assistance was peculiarly useful to him. Drawing her facts from her large private correspondence, illuminated by old experience, she would discuss the characters and motives of the sovereigns and statesmen of Europe much in the same way that an intelligent and observant country gentleman's wife might discuss those of her county neighbours. Their friendships and enmities, dispositions and tempers, tastes and prejudices, were spoken of with an intimate detachment which altogether ignored their peculiar environment. It was a point of view outside the reach of official diplomats. They could study national tendencies and policies in newspapers or public utterances, and add such information, generally of a doubtful accuracy, as patriotic reticence in the capitals to which they were accredited would vouchsafe to foreigners in private conversation. But the light thus obtained

upon the inspiration of men at the centre was, at the best, dim and uncertain. The Queen's contributions were invaluable in identifying and illuminating this personal element in European politics. When Lord Salisbury returned from one of his long talks with her at Windsor or Osborne, there would be no shadow of condescension in his report of her opinion upon this or that vexed question of a foreign statesman's secret balance of desire, or the exact relations between an Emperor's published point of view and his real one : "She knows what she is talking about," would be his comment.

It was not only from her familiarity with the minds and motives of foreign magnates that he drew enlightenment. In the speech which he made in the House of Lords after her death, he dwelt upon her political wisdom, her wide powers of vision and—as he often did at other times—upon her close touch with public opinion in this country,—especially that of the average members of the middle class.

"She certainly impressed many of us with a profound sense of the penetration—almost intuition—with which she saw the perils with which we might be threatened in any course it was thought expedient to adopt. She left upon my mind,—she left upon our minds—the conviction that it was always a dangerous matter to press on her any course of the expediency of which she was not thoroughly convinced ; and, I may say with confidence, that no Minister in her long reign ever disregarded her advice or pressed her to disregard it, without afterwards feeling that he had incurred a dangerous responsibility.

"She had an extraordinary knowledge of what her people would think,—extraordinary, because it could not come from any personal intercourse. I have said for years that I always felt that when I knew what the Queen thought, I knew pretty certainly what view

her subjects would take, and especially the middle class of her subjects." (*January 25, 1901.*)

One marked feature in her psychology, whose genuineness is in peculiar danger of being misjudged by present-day critics, was her inborn and inextinguishable consciousness of Queenship. It was more sympathetic to Lord Salisbury than it could have been to some of her Ministers. It was loftily embodied. The phrase, "my people," with its dependent variations, which appeared so frequently in her public utterances, was, in her eyes, no conventional locution. It represented a real relation of whose responsibility she never ceased to be conscious. The consciousness was not affected by the fact that the responsibility was unbacked by power. It rather appeared as if this limitation impelled her, through an absorbed occupation of thought and an unceasing industry, to find substitutes for a more direct acquittal of her trust. Though she accepted unreservedly the constitutional law under which all control of affairs was delegated to her Ministers, she never seemed to look upon them as being other than stewards. The people and the Empire whose welfare was in their hands were inalienably *hers*, and when, to her eyes, their power was misused, she grieved as keenly as if she herself had been to blame.

This acute sense of responsibility, with the fundamentally self-devoted—if rather illogical—conception of her office by which it was inspired, commanded Lord Salisbury's unqualified respect, and he was quite ready to accept the reactions of a less altruistic character that accompanied it. From her subjects she expected a tribute of loyalty as of right,—a tribute which, at least during these later years of her reign, was, in fact, constantly and unstintingly paid. In her

social relations, her certainty of the observance due to her was so complete that she never exacted it. Dignity suggests an element of self-consciousness ; if a single epithet had to be chosen for her manner, the most suitable word would have been simplicity. But, nevertheless, no one ever entered her presence without, voluntarily or involuntarily, doing it homage. She claimed the personal attendance of her Ministers and their assiduity in communicating with her, as being among the fundamental duties of their office. It was a claim which, at times, bore hardly upon hard-worked men. Lord Salisbury's friends would complain, he himself would occasionally murmur, at the frequent impact of a summons to Windsor or Osborne upon a time-table already crowded to overflowing. But he had largely himself to blame if compliance was not more often escaped. A plea of overwork or ill-health would bring a prompt withdrawal of the invitation, followed generally by a flow of telegraphic enquiry and an anxious letter pressing upon him warmly the need of care and rest. But he would never avail himself of this latent complaisance if he could help it. In essence, he acquiesced in and approved the assumption that he owed her personal as well as public service. It was the same with her demand that, where her personal presence or individual exertion was required, her comfort and convenience should be considered. Here her sex, perhaps, stood foremost in her consciousness, but the claims of her office were never forgotten. A woman who had been assailed throughout her lifetime by an unbroken stream of politicians, each alike convinced of the unique importance of the object for which he called upon her for effort, might have been justified in defensive protest on grounds of sheer self-preservation. But such an appeal *ad misericordiam* was never suffered to stand alone. She was a woman

and must not be overpressed ;—but she was also the Queen and must not be dictated to. Lord Salisbury was sympathetic to both pleas, even on the rare occasions when he felt bound to combat them.

The dual consciousness exhibited at these times, the inextricable mingling of Queen and woman in her was all-pervading and, in its paradoxical appeal, was probably largely responsible for the peculiar attraction which she exercised over her Ministers. She could be at once dependent and imperative, emotional and impersonally detached, narrowly domestic and widely imperial in her outlook. She would indignantly demur to postponing her arrangements for twenty-four hours for the convenience of a foreign potentate or a parliamentary majority, but would be even exaggerated in her consideration for that of the humbler members of her household. She would discuss their statecraft with the distinguished men who served her, dissent from it, perhaps, and expect her criticisms, vigorously worded on occasion, to be submitted and replied to with respectful deference ; but should sorrow strike them, or it might be merely some blow of disillusioned ambition or expectation, and they would become simply old friends to whom her heart would go out with spontaneous, impartial warmth. At such times she would touch the sore spot with a tact and delicacy which witnessed to rare gifts of emotional comprehension, and moved the recipient of her consolation to an abiding gratitude. She could with difficulty be induced to cultivate popularity by showing herself to the people whose duty of loyalty she assumed as of course ; but she had all a woman's pleasure in noting the warmth of their reception of her, and she never required prompting to express her fervent participation in any affliction which visited them.

Thus, to her Ministers, to the men whose relations with her were at once public and intimate, as she never ceased to be a Queen, so she never ceased to be a woman. Her appeals to their loyalty as subjects and to their chivalry as men were often indistinguishable. With Lord Salisbury the second of these appeals was perhaps more felt than with his predecessors, from the fact that he was the first of her Prime Ministers to be younger in age than herself,—Lord Rosebery, in his brief Ministry of 1894—95, being the only other one. The long strain of her public cares and private griefs had begun to tell upon her by the time he became Prime Minister. Her sense of impotent responsibility and of isolation from equal friendship weighed upon her continually. Her nervousness of strangers, of crowds, of ceremonial functions, had increased with age. The sense of feminine dependence, which was innate in her, had become intensified, and her Minister's instinct of protective championship was correspondingly emphasised. He would stint no personal labour to save her from trouble or anxiety. “I will *not* have the Queen worried,” was his recurrent negative to attempts on the part of colleagues or supporters to press her to distasteful decisions. If the object aimed at were a solid one—as, for instance, in hospitality to be offered to some foreigner whose goodwill was of importance and who might take umbrage at its omission,—he would himself approach her, and nearly always with success. A frank statement of the interests at stake, with a tacit appeal for her help, sufficed to rouse in her the sense of duty which, when roused, was imperative. But if it was only a question of official convenience or of dramatic effect upon public imagination, he always took her side in the quarrel. When argued with, he would maintain that the prolongation of her life, through

the avoidance of all needless strain upon her nerves and strength, was an asset for the public good whose importance far outweighed the trifling advantage which it was sought to secure. The same instinct for her defence under more serious causes of distress appears in the course of this narrative.

Though not immediately connected with her relations with himself, an incident may be recorded as showing that the feminine element in her need not be taken as having been all weakness. It included a form of courage as typical of her sex as it was of her office. It was in the last year of her life, just after the "black week" in the Boer War, when all that was articulate in the country's public opinion had surrendered to one of those unreasoning fits of panic to which it is periodically liable. Lord Salisbury was unwell—it was shortly after his wife's death—and Mr. Balfour went down to Windsor to see the Queen in his place. He began to speak to her, with intent of consolatory reassurance, of the alarmist reports which filled the papers. But he was at once cut short with the characteristic, quick little bend of the head in which all regality seemed concentrated: "Please understand that there is no one depressed in *this* house:—we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat;—they do not exist." Mr. Balfour returned to his uncle enthusiastically appreciative. It had been splendid to pass from the clamorous croakers in clubs and newspapers into the presence of this little old lady, alone among her women at Windsor, and hear her sweep all their vaticinations into nothingness with a nod.

No cataloguing of conditions can express a human relationship. This brief summary can only pretend to indicate some of the inspirations of affection and respect, and above all, of trust, which made this friend-

ship, outside the limits of his immediate family, the warmest and closest of Lord Salisbury's life. It will be understood that, under such conditions, he was scrupulous in respecting the Queen's claim to fuller information than the mere transmission of documents could supply, even though supplemented by frequent interviews whenever she was in London or within easy reach of it. He adopted one method for this purpose which had the advantage of involving little additional toil for himself. After an afternoon of interviews at the Foreign Office, he would write a brief résumé of their purport in the form of a letter to Her Majesty, of a similar character to those in which, according to the usual practice, he reported the results of Cabinet meetings and House of Lords' debates —though going, as a rule, into rather more detail. Copies kept of these letters served as the memoranda for his own use, which in any case would have had to be preserved.

By a special arrangement, Lord Salisbury devolved the minor appointments in the Prime Minister's gift upon the First Lord of the Treasury for the time being. But the patronage of major ones he had to reserve for himself, as well as the strictly political appointments to the Ministry itself. It was the function of Government which he approached with the least amount of self-confidence, always welcoming and often—in contradistinction to his usual attitude—seeking advice in its fulfilment. With regard to many non-political posts, he would be frankly partisan in his selections. Legal promotions did not come under his direct appointment, but he would never apologise for the practice of making them a reward for political “right thinking.” Within certain limits of intelligence, honesty, and knowledge of law, one man would

make as good a judge as another, and a Tory mentality was, *ipso facto*, more trustworthy than a Liberal one. "We must pay our debts first in the way of judge-ships," he wrote to Lord Randolph when the farewell distribution of places on leaving office in 1885 was being prepared for: "Legal partisans are as bad as duns even when it is not judge-ships they want. G. lies heavy on my soul; I dare not look C. in the face; and I am round the corner if I see S. H.; while the thought of W. keeps me awake at night" (*December 4, 1885*). An incident recorded by Mr. Buckle witnesses to the same point of view. The *Times*' editor called at Arlington Street for the express purpose of impressing upon the Prime Minister the disrepute which the Lord Chancellor was bringing upon the Government by certain partisan legal appointments. Lord Salisbury listened to his budget, and then observed, with meditative detachment, that it was hard on his colleague that he should be so much abused for what was, in fact, his own responsibility: "I believe it was I who pressed most strongly on him the claims of those who are considered the worst."

There were, however, two classes of appointment which such considerations were never allowed to influence. Officials in his own department might have what opinions they liked about Home Rule or the rights of private property, and the one of his private secretaries who was the most trusted, and marked for the quickest promotion, was, at the outset at least, an extreme Radical in home politics. Exclusively and rigidly direct also were the qualifications which he required for nomination to the bench of Bishops. Indifference to orthodox credentials need not be inferred from a response made, in this same correspondence with Lord Randolph, to a despairing question as to how to get rid of a highly placed civil

servant who was hopelessly inefficient and notoriously pious : “ If I might follow the precedents of the early Church, I should like to make him a Bishop.”

The making of Bishops was, indeed, the one of his public duties which cost him most heavily in labour and anxiety. “ I declare they die to spite me,” he groaned, when vacancies were piling up through an unusually quick succession of deaths and resignations on the episcopal bench. His intimacy with the general polity of the Church and the conditions of her work made him fastidious in his requirements, and yet, as he lived very little in ecclesiastical society, he had to rely for his selections almost wholly upon second-hand knowledge. The task was rendered harder by the fact that the quality upon which he insisted as indispensable—that of spirituality of character—was the one least possible to estimate from general report. Learning, eloquence, judgment, a proved capacity for administration, pastoral experience, were each in its way desirable, but he would not accept any of these as a substitute for a spiritual temper. Mr. Buckle presents a contrasting picture to the one just recorded when he describes how he found him, after Archbishop Benson’s death, pondering decision between two or three diocesans whose eminence marked them out as eligible for translation to Canterbury. It was not their competing qualifications in distinction which were occupying him : “ It seems to me essential that there should be no doubt in the public mind that the Archbishop of Canterbury is an earnest believing Christian,” and he mentioned two men from the names before him whom he considered to be pre-eminently able to fulfil this condition. The elder of the two, Dr. Temple, was the one ultimately chosen, and the younger, Dr. Davidson, became his successor six years later,—though on Mr. Balfour’s

recommendation, in the year after Lord Salisbury's retirement.

He was rigid also in exacting a whole-hearted devotion to the ministerial call. On one occasion, when a clergyman was urged upon him as being eminently fitted by his general qualifications for a bishopric, he rejected the recommendation on the sole ground that, some years before, the candidate had refused an invitation to a diocese abroad for reasons of family convenience. Rather unfairly, he was also critical when men belonging to the very type of which he was in search refused nomination on the plea of conscious insufficiency. "A member of the diplomatic service doesn't refuse a post to which I appoint him because he thinks himself 'unfit.' That is my responsibility, not his!" he would exclaim irritably. "The men who want bishoprics are unfit for them, and the men who are fit for them won't have them. I am sick of the business," was another cry of the heart wrung from him on one such occasion.

There were other obstacles to overcome. He held strongly that the episcopal bench ought to be representative of all schools of thought in the Church. His own personal relations were mainly with High Churchmen, and he lamented the more the lack of general distinction from which the evangelical party suffered at that time. Whenever a diocese fell vacant, which had a suitable tradition, he would start upon what he used to call the "hunt for a Low Churchman." It took him long and far: "Will no one find me one?" he used to exclaim despairingly. The Queen occasionally added to his difficulties. Usually, she accepted his suggestions without demur, though with a good deal of frank criticism; but she had certain personal antipathies which were unpersuadable, and, true to

his principles where her prerogative was concerned, he would never consent to force her hand. In view of all such impediments to freedom of choice in a search already obscured to discovery, it is not difficult to account for the huge bulk of the packages of correspondence which are preserved among his papers labelled for each successive diocesan appointment.

The political labours which a democratic constitution imposes upon a party leader, as much when he is in office as when he is out of it, took their share also of the time and energy which work at the Foreign Office left free. Public speaking was the competing task of whose burden he used most frequently to complain. But he accepted its necessity for the opportunity offered, not only of influencing opinion, but of studying it. The channels of information ordinarily open to a politician in London : the columns of the metropolitan Press, the agitations of the lobbies, the gossip of Clubland, or the manufactured propaganda which filled his postbag, were, he always maintained, useless for this purpose. On his "stumping" tours he would engage in talk with provincial leaders on their social and business, as well as their political, affairs ; would pick up in passing significant items of information ; would note the reception given to arguments or allusions deliberately introduced into his speeches with that object ; would register that indefinable impression as to the trend of feeling in a massed audience, which is the return of most successful oratory. All these things served as material for the formation of judgment, and as comments upon the

reports which reached him in the ordinary routine through the medium of the party machine.

The working of that machine took its quota also, though a limited one, of his time and attention. There was no need for interference with its methods. That was the classic period in Conservative electioneering. Under Mr. Akers Douglas as Whip, and Captain Middleton as Chief Agent, the organisation attained a completeness which could hardly have been improved upon. The accuracy with which Captain Middleton, whether by intuition or from experience, could calculate the "co-efficient of error" in the returns of his local workers, became proverbial. He would send forecasts to Lord Salisbury on the eve of a by-election which would be almost exactly reproduced in the numbers polled the following day. Apart from their efficiency, both party officials had a straightforwardness, loyalty, and simplicity of outlook which made them very pleasant to work with, and their chief's relations with them were intimately easy. A then junior member of the staff recalls how often, after the close of a House of Lords sitting, his brougham would draw up at St. Stephen's Chambers and, seating himself at Captain Middleton's table, while subordinates withdrew to a discreet distance, he would go through the last reports from the constituencies, weigh the qualifications of proposed candidates, or discuss with Whip and Agent the latest teacup-storm among some section of his supporters.

While fully appreciating the value of the machine as an instrument of action, he would never consent to regard it as an organ of opinion. The views to which it gave voice, whether in reports from the Central Office or through the elected delegates of the National Union, were always those of the same specialised class. It was the mentality of the wire-puller, of the partisan

worker which spoke, and he declared it to be the greatest of mistakes to identify this with the mentality of the electorate at large. He would check its recommendations from such independent sources of information as have been spoken of, but, more finally, by his own confident instinct as to the mind of his fellow-countrymen. Where this contradicted the reports of his advisers at the Central Office or the demands of provincial representatives, he never hesitated to act upon it. The rank and file of the organisation may have grumbled, but the chiefs never demurred. Their confidence was put to a more severe test by certain less deliberate revolts against their judgment, of which he was occasionally guilty. "There go twenty seats," Captain Middleton was overheard to murmur with a gesture of despair as he listened at a massed meeting to some epigrammatic indiscretion whose reappearance he visualised, cumulatively repeated on the enemy's platforms for months to come. But he stood the shock. Both he and Mr. Douglas were gifted with a saving sense of humour which buttressed the confidence, which contact had inspired, in their chief's larger attributes for leadership. The unstinted personal loyalty which they gave him up to the end was among the most satisfying of his experiences in politics.

CHAPTER VII

AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

If the poor opinion which Lord Salisbury entertained of the highest award of a political career be found depressing, the picture is brightened by his constant content with the work to which the greater part of his official life was devoted. Each time that his party was dismissed to Opposition he relinquished the Foreign Secretaryship with a pang, and his voluntary surrender of it to a colleague in 1886, and again for the last year and a half of his public life, were acts of real renunciation.

The fundamental reason for this difference of appreciation must be looked for in the relative degree of influence upon events which a man is able to exert as an administrator and as a politician. History witnesses markedly to the contrast. The substitution of the Emperor William for Prince Bismarck as the supreme authority in Germany had no marked effect upon her political economy. But the change in administrative control proved vitally disastrous to her and to Europe. On a smaller scale, M. Freycinet's defeat of M. Gambetta in 1882 left no noticeable trace on French legislation. But in its executive results, it determined the fate of Egypt for a generation, and had indirect but substantial influence upon the international relationships of France, England, and Germany. It would be difficult to name any statesman whose

elimination would have seriously affected the great political movements of democracy or of social reform in the England of the nineteenth century. But if Lord Castlereagh had been quite other than he was, the Treaty of Vienna, and with it the subsequent history of the European commonwealth, might well have been revolutionised. Though the detachment of international affairs from the legislative side of government makes this executive importance of the individual peculiarly apparent there, instances of it may be pointed to in other departments also. It was Mr. Gladstone's administration of the Treasury in the sixties, rather than the actual repeal of the Corn Laws, that evolved from a popular demand for cheap bread and untaxed raw material an elaborated system of national free trade, so conditioned as to prove for generations irreversible. No legislative action of that epoch had influence upon either side of the Irish quarrel equal to that of Mr. Balfour's Chief Secretaryship in the eighties and Mr. Birrell's in the Ministry of 1906. The constitutional or political development of a country is determined by forces over which individual statesmen have little control. But as representatives within existent political or national conditions, of the fundamental function for which government exists, they count decisively, whether for good or for evil.

To say that Lord Salisbury loved power might suggest invidious implications. That power was a necessary condition for his self-expression would be a more modern and a more accurate way of stating the fact. His judgment worked independently of that of his fellows, and was rarely in complete accord with it ; decision was easy to him ; fear of responsibility unknown ; initiative a normal instinct, and opportunity to translate it into action essential to his content. Therefore, he enjoyed the work of administration and

disliked that of parliamentary politics. He was happy at the India Office. The late Lord George Hamilton, who worked under him there for four years, protested to the writer of this book against the small space reserved in it for his Indian record. "I think without doubt," he says in a memorandum which he communicated to her on the subject, "that Lord Salisbury was the best Secretary of State that India has ever had." But in the India Office there was a Council to be consulted, and a Viceroy whose influence upon policy was at least equal to that of his chief. It was at the Foreign Office, with its exclusively centralised organisation, that he enjoyed the fullest independence of authority.

Other causes no doubt contributed to his affection for it. In the light of conventional commonplace one of these might be looked upon as paradoxical. Diplomatic work attracted him for its essential sincerity. In home politics, phrases rule. The majority of those engaged in them are content to look no further, and even those who do must pay constant homage to the phrase as distinct from the facts. But in international politics, no one can ever get away from the facts ; to ignore them is to court an immediate Nemesis, and a man's success in this field is in direct proportion to his capacity for their correct and prompt diagnosis. At the Foreign Office, probing for the reality which underlay happenings abroad, and laying his own plans in the light of its foreseen developments, Lord Salisbury stretched mental limbs cramped in the phrase-making of the platform or of the House of Lords. His interest in the subject-matter of his work need not be dwelt upon. He felt it in common with every man who is gifted with a modicum of imagination, and acquaintance with past history and an intelligent concern in the destinies of his fellow-creatures. It was strengthened

in his case by his dominating sense of trusteeship for his country's interests and his inborn hatred of war,—a combination which gave a supreme value to the two objects which diplomacy exists to reconcile. The aims set before him were eminently worth while, and were, at the same time, of that tangible and realisable character which his temperament required for full satisfaction.

It was to his departmental work that the bulk of his time was devoted. The demands of the Prime Ministership were superadded and, however lightened by his exclusion from the House of Commons, the burden was undoubtedly a heavy one.

It was particularly so in its incessancy. Sundays, which brought an intermission of interviews, came to be regarded only as opportunities for making up the week's arrears in paper-work, and his so-called holidays abroad were waited upon by an unbroken procession of messengers carrying sacks full of boxes, and by a constant correspondence of coded telegrams. On one or two occasions during his last two years at the Foreign Office, Mr. Balfour secured him a complete holiday by taking over his work there for a few weeks. With that reserve, it can be said that throughout the whole of the eleven and a half years—broken roughly into two halves by the Liberal Ministry of '92-'95,—during which he held the two offices, he never, except when he was ill, and then only while his temperature was seriously high, enjoyed a whole day's rest;—doubtfully half a day's. Nature exacted her penalty. There were repeated minor failures of health; he lived close to the physical breaking-point, and kept clear of it only by a careful avoidance of all exertion, mental or bodily, outside his work. When the end came, it was the opinion of his doctor that, in view of the original strength of his vital organs, it had been artificially hastened by the

long strain. But in any immediate sense, he did not find the work overwhelming. There was a slackening of energy and mental vigour during the last two years of office, but until then he showed no signs of staleness, nor ever appeared, except for the briefest intervals, to lose his spring or cease to give the impression of being thoroughly "on the top" of his work.

This is difficult to account for at first sight, in view of the degree in which he suffered from the strain of the Foreign Office work only in Lord Beaconsfield's Government of '78-80. Explanations suggest themselves. The breakdown of health from which he suffered in 1880, though its effects were exaggerated by overwork, had an independent origin. Then he never again had to face a danger so immediate as was the case in 1878, or one involving simultaneously such a multiplicity of critical negotiations. When he took charge in the spring of that year, England and the whole of Europe had drifted very close to the rocks of war, and it required a supreme concentration of energy to wrench the ship round into peaceful channels. Further, Lord Beaconsfield's age and special dependence on himself gave him, before his time, a substantial partnership in a Prime Minister's responsibilities in counsel and decision. But, probably the most satisfying explanation is that in 1878 he was new to his department, a stranger to its personnel, and without experience as to the most economic method of apportioning its work. When he came back to it in 1885, most of the men occupying higher posts in the service had already served under him. He knew their capacities and they were familiar with his views and methods of approach. His private correspondence with his agents abroad,—to his biographer's loss,—became far less full than it had been in his first Ministry. In the same way, his familiarity

with the mentality of his chief subordinates in the office itself enabled him to select with greater confidence the questions which could be left to their control.

His comparative isolation in supreme direction was a less patent but not less effective assistance in the economy of effort. It is true that it was only comparative. Large questions of policy were always subject to Cabinet authority, and he was scrupulous not to commit himself to any definite engagement until its sanction had been obtained. In the documents recently published by the German Foreign Office this reserve is stressed to a degree which must be accepted with qualifications. The frequency with which the ambassador reports him as offering the objections felt by Cabinet or the necessity of consulting it, as a reason for rejecting or postponing a reply to every kind of proposition, is hardly borne out by his own correspondence. It is to be remembered that courtesy is of the essence of diplomacy, and that where an unpalatable decision has to be stated, it is always more civil to father it upon a corporate body in the background than upon your own individual will.

Neither did his tenure of the double office eliminate communication with individual colleagues. There were chosen counsellors among them whose opinion he used to invite, and from whom suggestions were occasionally offered without invitation ; Commons' leaders were constantly referred to when parliamentary interest in the matter was anticipated ; there were inevitable inter-departmental discussions with the Treasury or the Colonial Office. But such communications and discussions were sporadic, and the fact that he was under no habitual necessity to let action wait upon reference to a Prime Minister's judgment created a measurable saving in time and trouble.

With the chiefs of his own office consultation was reduced to a minimum. Certain matters were delegated altogether to the principal and assistant under-secretaries : a number of minor negotiations *ab initio* ; interviews with the representatives of the less exalted powers ; the control of the junior personnel of the service, both at home and abroad ; selections for promotion to all but the higher appointments ; consequential, subsidiary, and routine business. He liked to have cognisance of what was going forward in these things, but that was all. When the dockets on papers sent up from the Foreign Office were being read through to him, a number would be dismissed at once, with—“Pauncefote¹ has got that in hand,” or “Sanderson² is entirely to be trusted about that,” followed by a brief order to initial whatever the officials in question had recommended. But complementary to this unreserved delegation was a tacit rejection of their assistance in those larger political questions which he kept in his own hands. He made no parade of reserve, and probably talked of these matters to his other under-secretaries, as he certainly did to Sir Philip Currie,³ the most intimately trusted of those who worked with him. But neither in his case nor in that of others did the asking or receiving of advice,—the taking of counsel together,—appear to form a recognisable element in their relations.

It was the same with his representatives abroad.

¹ Sir Julian Pauncefote [Lord], 1828–1902. Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office, 1882–1889; Minister and Ambassador at Washington, 1889–1899.

² Sir Thomas Sanderson [Lord], 1841–1926. Permanent Under-Secretary, 1894–1906.

³ 1834–1906. He went with Lord Salisbury to Constantinople in 1876; was his private secretary, 1878–1880, and acted for him again in that capacity in 1885, though already an Assistant Under-Secretary. Permanent Under-Secretary of State, 1889–1893; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1893–1898; at Rome, 1898–1902. K.C.B., 1885; G.C.B., 1892; a peer, as Lord Currie, 1899.

He would invite information from them and ask their opinion as to the reception which this or that proposed step would be likely to meet with from the Governments to which they were accredited. Otherwise his letters to them are merely elaborations of his more formal instructions; unconventionally colloquial in their phrasing, commenting upon the information he has received from them and, now and again, mentioning some point on which he invites them to use their own discretion in approaching their Foreign Minister. But there is no asking for counsel. To Sir Evelyn Baring, with whom his relations were unique, he leaves, as a rule, an entirely free hand as regards all purely Egyptian affairs; Sir Evelyn frequently appealing to him for advice where he is in doubt, but at other times, rather quaintly, telling him the instructions which he wishes to have sent out to him. Their correspondence on these issues is more like that between colleagues in a Cabinet than between a chief and his agent. But, even with him, if the question involves any external Government,—such as those of France or Turkey,—Lord Salisbury tells him, though with a full explanation of reasons, the course which he proposes to pursue without any suggestion of dividing responsibility by inviting his opinion upon it.

In conversation, his appreciative or critical references to his staff or his ambassadors would touch on the comparative quickness with which they grasped his purposes; the tact which they displayed in forwarding them; the relative value of the information which they collected for him; their skill in drafting desired formulae; their intimacy with the tangle of treaties and precedents which circumscribed action. But never any comment that can be recalled on their quality as counsellors or critics. Even among his agents in the African partition his admission of advice

never approached tolerance of such assistance as he refers to in a letter to one of his colleagues. He was warning him against the employment of a certain brilliant and enthusiastic subordinate: "He belongs," he said, "to the Gordon-Frere type of official, who thinks that it is his mission to save a short-sighted Government in spite of itself."

His arrangement of his working-day was congruous to these relations. He never went down to his office till after luncheon, and his afternoons there were devoted exclusively to interviews,—mainly with foreign representatives. All his paper-work, the composition and writing of the telegrams, private letters and draft despatches through which his policy was enacted, was done in the mornings and evenings in the solitude of his own room in Arlington Street or at Hatfield, with the occasional assistance of his shorthand-writer, Mr. Gunton.

One by-product of these methods had its inconveniences for those who came after him. Not infrequently he would conduct the opening and most crucial phase of a negotiation exclusively in personal interviews or private letters, and it would have achieved effective completion before the office had cognisance of it at all. If it failed to lead up to any formal or binding conclusion, there was no reason why they should ever have cognisance of it. In fact, it happened—certainly in one or two instances, very possibly in others—that important proposals were made to or by him of which, since they did not prove finally acceptable, no record remains at the British Foreign Office. Had this outcome of his detached methods been pointed out to him, he would have denied its importance, probably its disadvantages. Such still-born efforts would be binding on neither side, and his successors, working under changed con-

ditions, would be less trammeled by knowing nothing about them. On the other hand, in the present, it was vital for the continuance of good relations that the rejection of a friendly offer should be forgotten as quickly as possible, and of that, the absence of record was the safest insurance. Against such an immediate and practical advantage the vexation caused to curious historians or international controversialists in the future would have weighed very little with him.

Whatever may have been its concomitant disadvantages, this avoidance of consultation undoubtedly acted to the economising of his time and energy. Not only were undiscussed decisions more quickly come to, but concentration always came easier to him when undisturbed by extraneous suggestions. Not to all mentalities would such effortless self-dependence be possible ; that it was so to him counted substantially in the lightening of his labour.

As with his party officials, so with his Foreign Office staff. His independence of their judgment had no recognisable effect in diminishing either their friendliness or their confidence. If he made mistakes they called no unkind attention to their own enforced freedom from responsibility. They were a little in awe of him, only occasionally demurring to some of his breaches of official precedent, tolerating his heterodoxies humorously, proud of his success and jealous of his fame. Indeed, throughout his career as Foreign Minister, his reputation stood substantially higher in the official world than it did in the world outside. A member of the service who had had the unusual experience of being private secretary to three Prime Ministers,—Lord Beaconsfield, Mr. Gladstone, and Lord Salisbury,—was being rallied, some years after the latter's death, by a friend who was himself unconnected with any of them or with public life, on the

intimacy which he must have attained with weaknesses in his distinguished chiefs that were hidden from the vulgar eye. He did not deny it as regarded the first two, but refused to admit it in Lord Salisbury's case, adding, "Lord Salisbury was undoubtedly the greatest of the three."¹

In connection with the economising of time, the amount of that commodity which was wasted by some of his diplomatic visitors at the Foreign Office was often exasperating to him. When he felt that real business was being forwarded he could tolerate with comparative resignation the elaborate phrase-making in which most foreign diplomats loved to envelop the kernel of their messages. But he found it harder to do so with others who, having nothing to say on their own score—so he used to declare—came only to fish for material out of which to construct their weekly despatches home. He found the Turk a great offender in this respect. It was not from lack of individual intelligence in the officials themselves or from any dearth of matter for negotiation between the two States—which was generally plentiful. But it was a normal characteristic of the Porte at that time to refuse confidence to its own agents. All diplomacy, to be effectual, had to be carried through at Constantinople, and Lord Salisbury was often able to give the ambassador in London the first intimation of his own Government's intentions. Conversation with him under such conditions lacked actuality: "I don't like to refuse to see him," commented the Foreign Secretary compassionately, "as if I don't give him

¹ According to the late Bishop of Ripon, this comparative estimate was re-echoed by Queen Victoria on its least expected side. He was discussing Lord Beaconsfield with her;—it was during Lord Salisbury's last Ministry. The Queen spoke of his ability and fine imagination, but added, "Yes, he was great—but not so great as the present [Prime Minister]." Bishop Boyd Carpenter's *Some Pages of my Life*, p. 236.

something to write home, they will probably dock his next month's salary."

One unfortunate accompaniment of interviews of this description was that boredom, with its compulsion of mental inertia, always had the effect of sending him to sleep. "My mind requires distraction," he wrote in November 1887, in acknowledging a friend's letter, "for one subject only now occupies my thoughts. It is,—how shall I contrive to sit through my interviews with the ambassadors without falling asleep?" The sight in a shop window of a wooden paper-knife, shaped like a dagger, suggested to him a drastic method of averting the catastrophe. He secured it, and kept it on his table at the Foreign Office: when a conversation of foreseen vacuity opened, he would hold the point, under the concealing shadow of the table edge, pressed against his thigh, ready to be jammed home when temptation became irresistible.

But the interviews requiring such self-inflicted discipline must not be taken as typical. England was well treated by foreign Powers as a whole in the representatives whom they sent to London. As a rule they came to stay, Paris alone being accepted as on an equality with London in the scale of promotion, and, Lord Salisbury's long tenure of office corresponding, a serviceable intimacy resulted with many of these foreign colleagues. Two of the ambassadors, the Russian and the Austrian, who met him at the Foreign Office in 1885, had already been serving when he last held office. M. de Staal presented a very different type of his countrymen's mentality to the brilliant audacity of his predecessor, Count Schouvaloff. A cultivated gentleman, high-minded, seriously purposed, of German extraction and Liberal principles, with a fund of conversation on general topics, and a quietly enjoying sense of humour, he

was a popular figure in society. In business he was a genuine peace-seeker, personally straightforward and, as Lord Salisbury used respectfully to admit when engaged in one of their many diplomatic duels, "very intelligent." Count Karolyi was of a different type; a Hungarian noble with the interests and manners of an English country gentleman, easy to get on with, but so bored with the professional side of his mission that his visits to the Foreign Office were few and brief. The characteristic had its attraction in quiet times, but was embarrassing when business was urgent. "The Austrian ambassador has been to see me,—a rare occurrence," reported Lord Salisbury demurely to the Queen during a period of European stress.

M. Waddington, the Frenchman, though a comparatively recent arrival as ambassador, was also an old acquaintance. He had been for some years Foreign Minister in his own country and had represented it at the Berlin Congress. The influence of his British extraction had been fortified by an education at Rugby, and with a command of English which was faultless in idiom as well as accent, and that practical, common-sense appreciation of facts which Britons flatter themselves to be typically Anglo-Saxon, it was difficult to look upon him as a foreigner.

The German ambassador, Count Hatzfeldt, was a stranger, only succeeding Count Münster in the course of this autumn of 1885. He was as untrue to the conventional German type as M. Waddington was to the French one. A tall, thin man with a fine wit and polished manners, a Roman Catholic by religion, talking French like a native, but English not at all. He suffered under the English climate, and his appearance had that ultra-refinement which accompanies a combination of good breeding with delicate health. He had occupied a high post in the German

Foreign Office, and was said to be in great favour with the Chancellor, though Lord Salisbury criticised him at the outset for his failure in the characteristic for which his chief was noted :

“ I like Hatzfeldt very much, but what he wants is bluntness. He knows very well that it is our policy to go with him in all matters of secondary importance,—indeed, in all matters where we have not an imperative interest to the contrary. Why does he not speak out ? ” (*To Sir E. Malet, January 13, 1886.*)

The reserve objected to diminished as intimacy with the British Minister’s diplomatic methods increased. As years passed, the accepted candour of their intercourse, combined with the Count’s quick discernment of hints and appreciative sense of humour, made him the most favoured of Lord Salisbury’s foreign colleagues. He remained in London till his health finally broke, and into a period when the subject-matter of their communications became less pleasant than it was at the outset.

During the months that Lord Salisbury’s household was in residence at Hatfield, the interviews at the Foreign Office were limited by the necessity of his catching a seven-o’clock train from King’s Cross. He prided himself on wasting no time over this operation, and a regular drill established itself. One Foreign Office messenger stood outside the door of his room with his greatcoat ready, while another was on the watch at the foot of the private staircase which led from it to the Parade, where a single-horsed brougham stood waiting. His duty was to throw open the brougham door as soon as the Prime Minister’s footstep was heard on the stairs, and the horse was trained to start at full speed the instant that it clashed to behind him. It is a measure of the changed condi-

tions of traffic that the speed was maintained throughout the journey ;—under the Horse Guards' Arch, along Whitehall, across Trafalgar Square, up Charing Cross Avenue, and amidst the intricacies of Bloomsbury,—any momentary stoppage being made up for by the horse being whipped into a small gallop at the next stretch of clear going. Seventeen minutes, carefully timed by his watch, was the period which Lord Salisbury allowed from the moment of leaving his room in Downing Street to that of arriving at King's Cross. If the limit had been exceeded by a minute, he would report it as depressedly as a player who has taken a stroke beyond his established form in getting round the golf-course. The daily challenge to London traffic was his outlet for the sporting instinct, universal in mankind.

His regular use of the same train and his rejection of all companionship made his friends uneasy, and on one occasion a madman did, in fact, get into his compartment and travel down alone with him to Hatfield. Lord Salisbury accepted his greeting as of some acquaintance whom he had, as usual, failed to recognise ; slept, according to his invariable custom, during the journey, and, when his fellow-traveller offered to follow him into his carriage at Hatfield, acquiesced on the assumption that the unrecognised friend must be also an unremembered guest. It was only in the close contact of the brougham that the stranger revealed himself as a raving lunatic. He was happily not moved to any hostility, and though no one was about on their arrival, Lord Salisbury was able to make an excuse and pass on alone to his room. His method of apprising the household of what had happened was characteristic. The startled young footman who answered his bell reported afterwards that he had found his lordship at work among his papers, from

which he had glanced up to tell him, as of an everyday occurrence which called for no comment, that “ he had left a madman in the front hall.”

The only serious charge of superfluous industry which could be brought against him in his paper-work was his restriction of dictation. It belonged largely to his generation. In his private correspondence he would always write with his own hand to anyone with whom he was personally acquainted,—the category including the large majority of his diplomatic and ministerial subordinates. He was rather shy of arguing in defence of this practice to younger critics, but the alternative seemed to him impossibly discourteous. There remained plenty for his shorthand secretary, Mr. Gunton, to do, apart from taking down answers to the multitude of correspondents who could claim no acquaintance. Drafts and memoranda and telegrams were dictated in the privacy of his study at home, and now and again a despatch which for one reason or another he had reserved for his own composition. When published, his kenspeckle style would make it easily recognisable among the mass written out in the office from noted instructions. The condensation common to all telegrams makes their verbal authorship harder to identify. But, occasionally, the contrast presented to the surrounding flow of smooth correctness is not one of style alone. Sir Henry Wolff, abroad this summer upon a special mission connected with Egyptian affairs, reported home, among other things, a suggestion for the neutralisation of Egypt as a solution of present difficulties. The answering telegram, after dealing with the different points raised, concludes : “ As to neutralisation I will write. Pretty word—no real meaning.” One may assume, without further evidence, that that definition was not

drafted in the appropriate department of the Foreign Office. Equally so, the question which closes a telegram sent to his representative at Constantinople at a critical moment in the Eastern Roumelian negotiation : “ I gather that you are at a disadvantage as being the only ambassador who does not pay one of the Sultan’s Ministers. Do you think so ? If so, how much will it cost ? ”

There is an individual note of grave irony in another telegram sent to Sir Henry Wolff at Cairo. He was commenting on a speech which Sir Henry proposed addressing to the Khedive when presenting him with the copy of an agreed Convention on Egyptian defence and administration : “ I approve of your proposed speech to the Khedive with the exception of the phrase ‘ to request Your Highness to be pleased to devote your efforts to the execution of its provisions.’ Instead, I would suggest : ‘ To express a hope that Your Highness may sympathise in the elevated views which have dictated the Convention and will co-operate in carrying its provisions into effect.’ ”

The Foreign Office still preserves a tradition of the humour which brightened official life during his reign there. Ciphering clerks, rejoicing in the relief from the monotonous coding of platitudes, must have partly contributed to it. The specimens of his spoken wit which have been reported to the writer are not very striking. His conversation owed its reputation in this respect more to the intrusion of unexpected epithets and turns of phrase than to epigrams quotable apart from their context. One illustration of the uses of humour in diplomacy has been handed down. The Chinese Minister had called to complain of delays in the settlement of some question between his country and the Government of India. Lord Salisbury replied gently : “ The Minister must remember that we also

have a Tsungli-Yamen at Calcutta." The side-thrust at his own procrastinating superiors appealed to the Chinaman's sense of humour, and his complaint evaporated in a chuckle of laughter.

No doubt the indiscretions of his private correspondents added their quota to the tradition. In his earlier tenure of the Foreign Office, in 1879, he had decided, at Lord Odo Russell's suggestion, upon the then unprecedented experiment of attaching a commercial expert to the staff of the Berlin embassy. An under-secretary was discouraging, and Lord Salisbury wrote to reassure Lord Odo :

" Do not conclude that F.O. is against your views about the 'diplomatic bagman.' X.Y. is severely orthodox and rather looks upon all traders as an old maid looks upon all men—as being in a conspiracy to surprise him into some illicit favour."

Another letter, also dated 1879, was addressed to an old House of Commons comrade who had been pressed to ask for information upon one of those perennial personal grievances by which all public offices are haunted :

" It appears that Mr. —— is a disease under which every successive Secretary of State suffers, as dogs do of distemper. Usually the malady declares itself during the first year of office. It has been no doubt delayed in my case by my slow convalescence from the more dangerous disorder of the Eastern Question. The papers, which are voluminous, are being slowly collected by the indefatigable officers of this department. When ready they will be sent to you in a cart ! " (August 1879.)

His letters to Sir Henry Holland, afterwards Lord Knutsford, when at the Colonial Office, are constantly tempting to quotation, though they cannot always

be fitted into the narrative of this book. "There is a great deal of gubernatorial talent on the Treasury Bench which at present blushes unseen" was the delicately indirect form in which he appealed to him to assist in soothing certain House of Commons' dissents which had followed upon a ministerial reconstruction. He mentioned one exponent of such whose lobby intrigues had made him, in spite of great abilities, a thorn in the flesh of his comrades in Parliament. He is a man, Lord Salisbury suggests softly, "who is likely to render much more distinguished service if he is at a distance from his native land. . . . I will not enlarge upon this topic.—It will expand itself before your own mind in all its seductive amplitude. . . . Strain a point!"

This colleague's department was notorious at the time for its red-tape delays. The postscript added to another letter suggests that Lord Salisbury had had a recent chastening experience of them. The Colonial and Foreign Offices occupy adjacent blocks in Downing Street.

"*P.S.*—Do you mind our driving a hole into your room? It would expedite consultation—and the present distance between the Foreign Office and Colonial Office, reckoned by time, is about as long as the distance between London and Berlin."

The minutes, scrawled in red ink upon the documents sent to him, were another source of occasional enlivenment to his staff. A few are quoted in the text of this book. One, of hazier circumstance, survives in tradition. An adventurous trader, having got into—or made—trouble in a semi-civilised country and been personally maltreated by its ruler, appealed wrathfully on his return to the Foreign Office for redress, and vengeance on the offending potentate.

The appeal was returned from the Secretary of State's room, briefly minuted : " Buccaneers must expect to rough it."

Belonging rather to his other department was a comment in a letter to one of his colleagues upon a military officer of achieved distinction whose name had been suggested for a civil appointment : " X has reached that pitch of eminence at which men become imbecile." But soldiers and matters military had always a special faculty for exciting his powers of epigram. A last example comes from his correspondence with Sir Evelyn Baring. In 1892 the Turks became anxious for the return to them of certain small posts on the northern shores of the Red Sea which had been left temporarily in the hands of Egypt and were now therefore in British occupation. Sir Evelyn's military advisers were doubtful.

" I would not be too much impressed by what the soldiers tell you about the strategic importance of these places. If they were allowed full scope they would insist on the importance of garrisoning the moon in order to protect us from Mars." (*February 5, 1892.*)

CHAPTER VIII

FOREIGN AFFAIRS, 1885

LORD SALISBURY's administration of the Foreign Office in 1885 was too short-lived to give opportunity for any constructive or long-prepared policy. The quality which was most prominently apparent in it was the ubiquity of its initiative. Neglect or postponement of action had been notable causes of failure in England's recent diplomatic history, and a wish to make up for lost time was tempting to, perhaps, an excess of activity. False starts were the penalty occasionally paid. It was not always immediately possible to pick up threads which had been dropped for five years.

This interruption of experience was of small importance as regarded the larger outlines of European relations. The same grouping of the great Powers was there, fundamentally unchanged, still slowly crystallising into permanency under the pressure of the same competing terrors. Only in the foreign relations of his own country was there difference as well as continuity to be noted, and such temporary modifications as appeared in those of other Powers were most of them traceable to this cause.

Unfortunately the difference was all in one direction. The old antagonisms remained, but the old friendships had disappeared. Turkey had been finally lost as a dependent ally. Those preparatory steps for

the redemption of Asia Minor which had so largely occupied Lord Salisbury's energies in '79 and '80 had been irremediably effaced, and the extinction of our paramountcy at Constantinople had deprived England of all solid basis for further interference in that direction.

France had been alienated by the Egyptian adventure, while by a strange irony the quarrel which Liberal statesmen had fastened upon Austria in their anxiety to dissociate themselves from the anti-Russian policy of 1878 had had as its immediate, though indirect, result a conversion of Russia's latent, into active hostility. Lord Salisbury, writing this summer to the Queen (July 9), reports a conversation which Lord Lytton¹ had had in the previous May with Count Kalmoky, an old diplomatic acquaintance of his who had now become Foreign Minister in Vienna. When Lord Lytton reproached him with having abandoned the old collaboration with England, he had replied that he had been compelled to it by information that the Liberal Government was preparing to conclude a formal alliance with Russia. There is no evidence of any such intended departure from Lord Granville's rigid avoidance of commitments. But the suspicion had sufficed to convince the habitual timidity of the Dual Monarchy of the necessity of at once entering into competition with England for Russian favour.

That was a state of mind which adapted itself admirably to what had been for years the fundamental aim of Prince Bismarck's policy. The Austro-German defensive alliance of 1879, with its sequel in the Triple Alliance with Italy three years later, had only been resorted to as a counsel of despair. With Austria easy of persuasion in her dread of Anglo-Russian

¹ The 1st Earl of Lytton: Viceroy of India, 1876-80; Ambassador at Paris, 1888-91. He had spent most of his earlier life in diplomacy, and had held two appointments in Vienna, 1860-63 and 1869-72.

friendship, he reverted to earlier combinations. There were meetings between Emperors and their Ministers at Skiernevise and Kremsier; secret understandings were come to apportioning "spheres of influence" in the Balkans east and west of a longitudinal line; the Drei-Kaiser-Bund was resuscitated as a phrase in the columns of press correspondents and in the private letters of ambassadors.

British interests supplied the sacrificial offering on this altar of reconciliation. Russia was to be compensated for self-restraint in Europe by being given a free hand in Asia. In the course of this spring Germany and Austria had taken the lead in that recommendation to the Sultan which has already been referred to,¹ to close the Dardanelles in the event of the anticipated war between Russia and England. In 1890, when the German Government of that day was urging its claims on Russian gratitude, it recalled this action as having destroyed England's chances of victory through the baulking of her naval advantage, and having thus compelled her to a peaceful acquiescence in Russia's advance on the Afghan frontier.² However this may have been, Russian militarist visionaries had for the time being substituted India for Constantinople as the inspiration of their dreams, and accepted Central Asia as a more fruitful field for aggressive energy than the Balkan peninsula.

This was not the only European quarrel in which Great Britain had acted the part of involuntary peace-maker. M. Jules Ferry had been anxious to bring the long tale of Franco-German hostility to a close, and, taking advantage of Prince Bismarck's irritation over Colonial matters, had proposed that a

¹ See *ante*, Chapter V. p. 186. *Germ. Dip. Doc.* vol. i. p. 197 (*Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. iv. p. 118).

² *Germ. Dip. Doc.* vol. ii. p. 4 (*Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. vii. p. 24).

truce should be called at England's expense.¹ The German Chancellor had agreed and had offered as his contribution a diplomatic support against her in Egypt which had added materially to her financial and administrative difficulties there.

His hostility had not been inspired solely by the bargaining opportunities offered by England's passivity. The domineering fretfulness which had become characteristic of his old age had been exasperated to madness by the divided direction which obtained in the Gladstonian Cabinet. Germany had started on her career of Colonial expansion, and her traders,—and sometimes her Government,—had of necessity been brought into contact with the British Empire in different quarters of the globe,—in Fiji, New Guinea, the Congo, South West Africa. The questions hitherto raised had not been important nor would have been difficult of adjustment but for the friction which Downing Street, speaking with two voices from the Foreign and Colonial Offices, had introduced into them. In Angra Pequena especially, a needlessly militant opposition from the latter department had, after endless correspondence, been apologetically withdrawn by the former, but too late to appease the Chancellor's anger. He had spoken his scornful irritation publicly in the Reichstag, and provocative recriminations were fast becoming the normal note in Anglo-German communications.

Lord Salisbury thus found himself the inheritor of a *tabula rasa* in continental friendships. The alienation of France and Russia might be looked upon as inevitable; without surrendering rights in Egypt and India, which could not be abandoned, it was for the time irremediable. But with the Central Powers the

¹ *Germ. Dip. Doc.* vol. i. pp. 132-143 (*Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. iii. pp. 414-419).

position could not be hopeless. In Prince Bismarck's eyes the French had already failed to do their part in the agreed interchange of "friendly offices" and the short-lived understanding between them need form no obstacle to a reconciliation. Near-East politics offered a more difficult problem. Prince Bismarck was still nervously anxious for the maintenance of the Drei-Kaiser-Bund, and it was a cause in which he could not afford to waste chances. Pan-Slavism had not intermitted its propaganda; anxious Austrians were still convinced that Russia's aim was to become dominant in the Balkans and that the achievement of that aim would be the death-blow of Austria-Hungary as an Empire. In conversation that autumn Prince Bismarck complained that the dam which he had built up between his neighbours burst on the average once a year, "and then I have, like a brick-layer, to patch it up." But so long as friendship with England did not include hostility to Russia there was no solid reason against its renewal. Its breach, in Lord Salisbury's belief, where it was not, as in the Colonial questions, the result of sheer mismanagement, was mainly due to England's voluntary withdrawal from the diplomatic market-place. A discriminating activity in exhibiting the value of her goodwill was the remedy to which he at once applied himself.

He prepared the way by a private letter to Prince Bismarck (July 2). He recalled the friendliness of their earlier relations and expressed hopes of its renewal. He asked directly for the Chancellor's help in the removal of obstacles which Germany had raised to the immediate levying of an urgently required Egyptian loan and, while stating his own anxiety to avoid a breach with Russia, offered reasons against its probability which were selected as likely to be convincing to his correspondent :

"To speak candidly, our railroad towards Kandahar will not be finished for two years and I believe Russia is in precisely the same condition. We have both, therefore, the strongest interest to keep the peace for that time, if no longer—but I hope it may be much longer."

There is one passage in this letter, referring to the uncertainty of his own tenure of office and the doubts as to the worth of his present offer of national friendship which he knew that it might suggest, that is of interest in another connection. He has, he says, imparted to the bearer of this letter his own opinions as to the future of English politics ; he hopes that they may aid the Prince in forming a judgment, and concludes with the oracular declaration, "I think that you may reasonably count on a continuity of policy in this matter." The same prediction was repeated more elaborately in a conversation with the Austrian ambassador which he reported to Sir Augustus Paget, the British representative at Vienna :

"I have pressed upon Karolyi the consideration, which I believe to be sound, that the possible return of the Liberals to power next December must not be taken as a probable return of the recent Liberal policy. I explained which were the parts of the recent Liberal Government which were likely in such an event to return and which were not likely, and I said I thought the Liberal policy would be more near Lord Palmerston's than Mr. Gladstone's." (*July 6, 1885.*)

Lord Salisbury gives no grounds for these assertions and there is no suggestion here or elsewhere of his having had any communication on the subject with the Liberal leaders. He was not given to bluff, but if no such grounds existed, these assured predictions as to decisions over which he could have no control, deliberately offered as credentials of confidence to

foreign Governments, were bluff of an audacious kind. They were in fact fulfilled in the event. Six months later, on the formation of the Gladstonian Government in February 1886, Lord Rosebery was, at the Queen's demand, substituted for Lord Granville as Foreign Secretary, and readily gave the undertaking which she required of him to continue the policy of his immediate predecessor. In view of this conclusion there can be little doubt that the assurances quoted must have been based on an understanding already come to with Her Majesty—probably in the course of those preliminary talks at Balmoral. Lord Salisbury never spoke of such an understanding but, where her constitutional position was involved, his discretion was absolute. She would have dwelt upon her anxiety lest the result of the approaching elections should renew the evils from which the country had just been rescued, and he would have advised her to avert them by asserting her prerogative to a voice in the distribution of offices—a prerogative which she had never allowed to fall wholly into abeyance. Once she had consented to his counsel, he knew her well enough to be able to count upon her constancy in acting upon it, and therefore, on this assumption, both the confidence of his assurances and his reticence as to their basis are explained.

It may be noted in this connection that, apart from this particular instance, Lord Salisbury always insisted both on the constitutional right of the Crown to have a voice in individual appointments and on the strength of the position which it occupied in that respect. No appointment could legally be made without the Sovereign's consent, and no Minister would be willing to precipitate a constitutional crisis or risk the fate of his Government and party by dissolving Parliament on a subordinate personal issue. He him-

self was scrupulous in respecting this prerogative, in the spirit as well as in the letter. The names which he submitted to the Queen were always accompanied by full reasons for their selection and though, as a rule, she accepted his choice without demur or was easily convinced of its merits, there were exceptions to that rule when he would accept defeat without protest.

Prince Bismarck replied courteously to his letter¹ and promised "to do his best to promote any arrangement that might be satisfactory" to Lord Salisbury in the matter of the Egyptian loan. He kept his word and thus enabled the rescue of Egypt from imminent bankruptcy. Lord Salisbury did not over-value his success.

"I think the German and Austrian Governments are disposed to help us," he wrote to our ambassador at St. Petersburg, "or at least to abstain from thwarting us, and the French have not shewn any traceable signs of hostility as yet, but it would be very rash to assume any friendship in any of them. I think, for some time to come, England will remain comparatively isolated and her word will weigh less in Europe than it did twenty years ago." (*To Sir E. Thornton, July 21, 1885.*)

A few weeks later he made another personal approach to the German Chancellor of a more elaborate kind. By previous arrangement with his chief, Sir Philip Currie took advantage of a meeting with Count Herbert Bismarck, at Marienbad, to obtain an invitation to the Prince's country house at Friedrichsruhe. He went there as the avowed though unofficial emissary of the Foreign Secretary, and on his return communicated, in a private memorandum, the purport of his conversations with the Chancellor. This docu-

¹ *Germ. Dip. Doc.* vol. i. p. 208 (*Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. iv. p. 188).

ment is not suitable for inclusion in the text of this biography, since it is concerned with Prince Bismarck's rather than Lord Salisbury's views. It has an historical interest of its own, and its substance has, therefore, been inserted as an appendix to this chapter. Meanwhile, Lord Salisbury found opportunity for more concrete bids for Germany's goodwill. He offered to mediate in her interest in a hornet's nest which she had unwittingly stirred up by proclaiming a protectorate over the Caroline Islands, to whose sovereignty Spain asserted rights dating from the seventeenth century, and the mediation was successful.

A similar service was rendered in East Africa. Until recently this part of the world had supplied little material of interest to the Foreign Offices of Europe. They had not indeed been anxious to include it among their responsibilities. The island of Zanzibar, which, as the ancient centre of Arab rule upon the coast, claimed a doubtful sovereignty over the mainland opposite, had had long established trade relations with India, and, to a degree, with Madagascar, and its Sultan—conscious of decaying power—had in turn entreated both England and France to give him the support of a European protectorate. They had refused, and in 1862 had entered into a mutual engagement to respect his independence.

But there were forces at work too strong for the self-effacement of Governments. England was early compelled by the unique part which she played in the war against the Slave Trade to the exercise of unlegalised authority in the island. That iniquity, driven from the Atlantic, and finding the route across the Red Sea becoming increasingly unsafe for the export of its human merchandise, had for some years found its main outlet through the Indian Ocean, with Zanzibar

as its central mart. In 1873, Great Britain, relying for moral sanction on the public opinion of Europe, and for actual sanction upon the guns of her cruisers,—which in their perennial warfare against the Trade were rarely absent from those waters,—had compelled the Sultan to a treaty under which all sea-borne traffic in slaves was forbidden in his ports. His Arab subjects found their main occupation and source of revenue threatened, and the task of saving the treaty from becoming a dead letter under their pressure devolved upon the British Consul, Sir John Kirk. He was a whilom companion of Livingstone's, an enthusiast in the cause, and in his ceaseless pursuit of the object which had been his life's inspiration, he inevitably achieved a dominating control over the Sultan's Government.

The strip of territory over which that Government could alone claim actual dominion on the mainland of Africa, though it extended along some 6000 miles of coast, did not average more than ten miles in width. Behind it lay the still unmapped continent with its unlimited supply of raw material for the Slave Trade, and its unexplored but hopeful possibilities for more creditable forms of commerce. In 1885, one English and two German companies had established themselves on the coast, and were negotiating with the Sultan for concessions of ports and trading facilities. Controversies had arisen as to the extent and nature of his rights, which, with the Germans, had become embittered. An acute quarrel had recently broken out between them and the Sultan in connection with Witu, the scene of the smaller and earlier of the two German enterprises. It lay on the southern borders of Somaliland, separated from the larger settlement of the German East African Company by the intervening British sphere of operations. Its local

chieftain was in revolt against Zanzibar and had invited Germany to assume its sovereignty—an invitation which, in spite of the Sultan's indignant remonstrances, the latter accepted. When Lord Salisbury took office a deadlock had been reached ; the enraged Sultan had landed troops on the mainland in defence of his uncertain kingship, and German warships had appeared in Zanzibar waters with instructions to vindicate the outraged dignity of the German Reich.

He intervened without delay, and within a week of taking over the reins at the Foreign Office, telegraphed to Sir John Kirk to use all his influence to pacify the Sultan and induce a more complaisant attitude. It was all that even Sir John could do to appease the anger which German diplomatic methods had aroused in the inflammable Arab, but after some weeks he effected a settlement. The Sultan agreed to confer with an International Commission composed of British, French, and German representatives as to the actual and operative limits of his suzerainty, and the Germans agreed to defer their claims to the decision of this Commission.

The following letter to Sir Edward Malet,¹ written in the course of these negotiations, indicates the characteristically British state of mind in which Lord Salisbury approached this opening phase in the evolution of a new Imperial dominion. The contemplation of such a development was dismissed as “swagger,”—the only object recognised being the eminently practical one of securing a fair field for the commercial enterprise of his fellow-countrymen.

To Sir Edward Malet, August 24, 1885.

“ By this messenger you will get the last utterance of Berlin on Zanzibar, and also the instructions

¹ British Ambassador at Berlin.

which they propose to give to their German Commissioner. Both documents betray an itching to confiscate the coast as well as the interior. This is, I think, an unwise display of swagger. The coast cannot be of the slightest use to Germans or to any other Europeans. All they want is a safe passage through it, without paying immoderate duties. A far better plan than annexing the coast would be to allow the Sultan to levy a small *ad valorem* duty, five per cent., at all places where he has ever exercised any kind of authority—binding him not to raise it, and to make it equal for all the world. This matter of equality is the only point in which the whole negotiation really touches Englishmen. The only issue to the discussion which would be intolerable to us would be the possession of one or two free ports by the Germans, and the rest of the coast in the hands of Zanzibar, and a heavy tariff. This would, of course, make the Germans the monopolists of the Big Lakes market."

The co-ordination of these various diplomatic activities is summarised in a letter to Lord Iddesleigh :

"I have been using the credit I have got with Bismarck in Caroline Islands and Zanzibar to get help in Russia and Turkey and Egypt. He is rather a Jew, but on the whole I have as yet got my money's worth." (August 24, 1885.)

The date suggests that Lord Salisbury believed the German Chancellor to have assisted in the successful issue of the Afghan negotiations. They had begun badly. M. Giers, the Russian Foreign Minister, having declared that the line of demarcation to which he had agreed after the conclusion of the Penjdeh incident required, upon reflection, longer consideration. Further advances of Russian troops on the Afghan frontier were reported from India ; her intention to fight was credited both in Berlin and Vienna, and the British Cabinet discussed preparations for war.

But Lord Salisbury was never seriously disturbed. He wrote to Lord Randolph Churchill in July that he believed the fresh difficulties to have arisen only from "Giers' desire to make good his reputation against the military party and avoid the reproach of yielding too easily to England." The event justified this opinion, and after repeated delays, which tried his temper severely by keeping him needlessly in London after Parliament had been prorogued, the Russians on this 24th August offered a line which conceded the main points at issue, and a protocol registering the agreement was finally signed on September 7.

To Sir Robert Morier,¹ September 15, 1885.

"It is very difficult to come to any satisfactory conclusion as to the real objects of Russian policy. I am more inclined to believe that there are none: that the Emperor is really his own Minister, and so bad a Minister that no consequent or coherent policy is pursued; but that each influential person, military or civil, snatches from him as opportunity offers the decisions which such person at the moment wants, and that the mutual effect of these decisions on each other is determined almost exclusively by chance.

"I think the solemn warning you addressed to Giers was well justified. If Russia satisfies us that there is not room in Asia for herself and us also, our policy to her must be of a very internecine, and probably also, of an effective character. . . ."

He was more occupied with the other problem which he had inherited from his predecessors—that of Egypt. The ground there was still cumbered with the wreck of recent disaster. The withdrawal of the Khartoum relief force before the still-advancing

¹ Newly appointed British Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

dervish invasion had scarcely been accomplished when he took office. The southern frontier of Egypt proper was being threatened, and her administration was sunk in anarchy and insolvency. There was a hamper of cosmopolitan creditors' rights constantly available for the levying of diplomatic blackmail ; but, happily, these were the only engagements by which British initiative was trammelled. Whatever some members of the late Government may have intended, no pledges had been given. Lord Salisbury found himself with a free hand for the future, and the line of policy which he laid down in the course of these six months did, in fact, determine the course of Egyptian history for more than a generation.

The more ardent spirits of his party would have welcomed annexation : Prince Bismarck, from whatever complication of motive, continued to advise it : the rest of Europe, with varying degrees of umbraegeous suspicion, were convinced of its probability. But Lord Salisbury had always been opposed to the addition of so incalculable a burden to the permanent responsibilities of the Empire. England must, however, complete the task upon which she had entered, and he had already, while in Opposition, defined what he held that task to involve. We must not leave Egypt until we had restored to her a solvent and matured administration and a settled frontier ; and, in leaving her, we must ensure as against other Powers, those Imperial interests of our own which were involved in her geographical position. For the achievement of these purposes freedom from interference while control lasted, and freedom in determining the date and terms of its withdrawal, were necessary conditions. The assertion of this claim and the provision of conditions under which it could be maintained were thus the immediate requirements of his policy.

From every point of view economic restoration stood in the forefront. Apart from its administrative necessity, it offered the only hope of escape from international servitude. Sir Evelyn Baring was already installed in Cairo as Agent-General, and as regards the marvellous transformation which was effected under his direction during the twenty years that followed, Lord Salisbury can claim no other credit than the opportunity which he secured for him. Administrative genius is powerless unless politicians will give it a fair field to work in. Therefore, though soldiers were still pressing for another "defensive" expedition against the dervishes, the incoming Minister at once opposed a *non possumus* to the demand. The restoration of peace in the Soudan must wait. The Mahdi had died that summer, but the Khalifa had succeeded him, as strong in the energetic cruelty of his despotism as the Mahdi had been in his appeal to fanaticism. Later on, the rescue of the country from the misery to which our failures of the last two years had consigned it became a fixed point in Lord Salisbury's purpose, and even now, in his first letter to the Cairo Agency after taking office, he visualised plans for its achievement, though warning his correspondent that the time for their fulfilment was not yet. During Sir Evelyn Baring's absence on leave, Mr. Egerton¹ was in charge.

To Mr. Egerton, August 14, 1885.

"I think the railway ought at once to be carried forward to Fatmeh (is that the name?) by which the first zone of cataracts will be turned. It will then be a matter of perfect ease to re-occupy Dongola, without any large expenditure, whenever the Egyptian

¹ Later Sir Edwin Egerton, Secretary of Legation in Paris, 1886-1892; Minister at Athens, 1892-1903.

Government shall feel itself in a condition to do so. Later on another railway will be wanted to turn the reach of cataracts which intervene between Dongola and Berber, and I suppose that, if Egypt becomes master of Berber, it also becomes master of Khartoum, and the railway from Berber to the coast can hardly fail to follow in due time. But these anticipations are for the future, to be kept in mind as an object towards which we should work, but they are wholly out of the reach of our present penury. I have mentioned them rather to illustrate what I mean when I express a hope that there may be no more 'expeditions.' Egypt should expand southwards, but it should take its railway with it."

It was not only from the burden of military adventure that the work of reconstruction had to be safeguarded. Continental Powers had shown a sinister disposition to extend their rights of interference from finance to politics. When neighbours are meditating an unacceptable proposition, the way of peace lies in making clear your repudiation of it before they have had time to formulate it. A complaint of the Sultan's, as to the way in which his treaty rights over Egypt had been ignored during the late troubles, offered the desired opportunity. Lord Salisbury expressed his sympathy, and despatched Sir Henry Drummond Wolff¹ on a special mission to Constantinople to invite the co-operation of the Suzerain of Egypt in garrisoning her frontier against dervish attack. This act of recognition served to deprecate the suspicion that England herself intended to assume sovereignty, and at the same time enabled Lord Salisbury, in invitin

¹ 1830-1908. A diplomat in his youth, he had been employed on more than one special mission in the Near East. In Parliament, 1874-1885, he was a member of Lord Randolph's Fourth Party. After this mission and one of greater importance in 1887 (see Vol. IV. Chapter II.), he re-entered the diplomatic service, and was Minister in Teheran and Bucharest and ambassador in Madrid successively, retiring in 1900.

diplomatic support for the mission, to refer unprovocatively to the conditions which he intended should govern the British occupation.

*Telegram to Sir Henry Drummond Wolff,
August 13, 1885.*

“The end to which I would work is evacuation, but with certain privileges reserved for England. I should like a Treaty right to occupy Alexandria when we pleased,—and a predominance in the control of the railways,—and perhaps one or two other things. These terms may seem hard to obtain, but I would not cut myself off from them until the state of Europe had cleared up. If we come back strong from the elections and if we can persuade Germany to go with us, the result I speak of is possible. For these reasons I do not at present see my way to bind ourselves to a fixed date of evacuation. I am quite content the Turks should be there as long as we are ; but no fixed date. Nor would I pledge myself to obtain the formal consent of the Powers to anything we do. . . . I quite agree with you in objecting either to annexation or international control.”

To Sir A. Paget, August 18, 1885.

“We are very anxious to get Turkish soldiers—they need not be in any very great numbers—sent to Egypt, both for the obvious convenience of using soldiers who will stand the heat better than ours, and who are of the same religion as the natives,—but also and still more for a political reason. We cannot fix a date for leaving Egypt. If we did so, or if we talked of leaving it soon, we should make ourselves powerless for all purposes of internal government and reform there. At the same time we wish to give a sort of token that we harbour no intentions at variance with the Treaty of Paris. It seems to us that small bodies of Turkish troops, sent there to stay as long as the

English, and go when they go, will regularise our position. It will not really interfere with our power, but it will put us in a position where we can better hold our own. . . . Whether we shall be able to get over Turkish apathy and French jealousy remains to be seen, but we want what assistance the good offices of Austria can give us."

The response was not unfavourable so far as the Christian Powers were concerned, though he did not find exaggerated hopes upon it.

"As far as words go," he wrote to Sir Henry on September 1, "both Austria and Germany seem to be thoroughly with us, and France is not nearly so far from us as we thought. . . . There does not seem to be anything in the state of the controversy which cannot be solved if they are all speaking the truth. But that is unlikely."

The mission failed of its immediate object. After the usual series of consents, postponements, and withdrawals, which characterised all diplomacy with the Porte, the Turkish co-operation was finally reduced to the despatch of a Turkish Commissioner to Cairo, nominally to consult upon frontier organisation, actually to remain there for some years as the impotent representative of a non-existent suzerain authority. But the indirect purpose which Lord Salisbury had in view was attained. His claim to a free hand passed without protest. The continental Powers, in responding approval, as they could hardly avoid doing, of the recognition of Turkey's treaty rights, were stopped from making those claims to interference on their own account which had been justified by the irregular status of the British occupation. Lord Salisbury, in writing to console Sir Henry on his failure, congratulated him upon having been instru-

mental in " changing the Egyptian question from an international one into an Anglo-Turkish one " (*November* 6). It was as such that it became the subject of a more purposeful diplomatic enterprise eighteen months later.

The only sensational crisis in foreign affairs which took place during this Ministry had its appropriate origin in the Balkan Peninsula. The revolt of Eastern Roumelia in 1885 and its union with the principality of Bulgaria north of the Balkans, was an episode impregnated with paradox. Lord Salisbury achieved a diplomatic success against Russia in defence of an arrangement of which seven years before he had been the leading opponent and Russia the most ardent champion. This double inconsistency originated in a miscalculation of which all the Governments represented at the Berlin Congress appear to have been the victims. When, on that occasion, the rest of Europe, led by England and Austria, defeated Russia's demand for a " big " Bulgaria, both sides in the quarrel assumed that a people liberated by her armies would remain devoted to her interests. The assumption proved singularly incorrect. Whatever gratitude may have existed originally had been rapidly dissipated by the intrusive activities of the benefactors. The Russian officers deputed to drill and command the Bulgarian army, and the Russian administrators and propagandists, scattered throughout the two provinces, had succeeded in making themselves heartily disliked in both. This hostility might have remained passive and inarticulate if it had not found a champion in the young ruler who

had been carefully selected with the opposite intention. Prince Alexander of Battenberg had been the nominee of Russia. He was the offspring of a morganatic marriage between the German brother of the late Russian Empress and a Polish lady. He was the Czar's first cousin, and held a commission in his army. His characteristics were more typical of his mother's than his father's nationality. His enemies accused him of being independable, restless, and ambitious; everyone was agreed as to his great military talents, his personal gallantry, his good looks, and the compelling charm which he exercised upon his company. He remains one of the most romantic if ineffectual figures in modern Balkan history. Unfortunately for himself, his conception of the position to which he had been promoted differed materially from that of his patron. The Czar expected a grateful subserviency; the Prince aspired to make history independently. He complained to his confidants of the Russian intrigues by which he was surrounded and of the constant interference to which he was subjected, and, though outwardly respectful to his august cousin, exerted all his powers of private diplomacy in securing support against him both in the Courts of Europe and among his own subjects. To the Czar Alexander III.,—an autocrat who made a religion of his rights,—an honest, obstinate, and rather stupid man,—this conduct appeared as insolence aggravated by falsity, and his resentment had been for the last two or three years bitter and unconcealed. In the confidential diplomacy of central Europe a change on the throne of Bulgaria had been for some time discussed as an event resolved upon by Russia, and, on that account, to be resisted by Austria.¹

Meanwhile Bulgarian patriots were in a dilemma.

¹ *Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. iii. pp. 342-52.

The liberation of Eastern Roumelia from Turkish rule and its union with the already autonomous principality on the north of the mountains was their most cherished aspiration. But Russia had also proclaimed it as the main object of her policy, and to owe this further boon to the favour of their dictatorial patron would be intolerable. In this autumn of 1885, with what degree of previous consultation with the Prince has never appeared, they found a solution of the problem in which the peculiar gift for secret organisation which seems inherent in all the Balkan races was fully displayed.

On September 18, a revolutionary Committee, whose very existence had been unsuspected by any of the watchful representatives of Europe on the spot, emerged suddenly in Philippopolis, the chief town of Eastern Roumelia ; arrested and deported the Turkish Governor with all his staff ; and invited Prince Alexander to place himself at the head of their revolt. He was propitiously on the frontier, at Varna, and having received the invitation on the telephone, started forthwith for Philippopolis. There, on Sunday the 20th, he formally proclaimed the union of the two provinces under himself as ruler. The Sultan's Government, smitten with the paralytic panic which was habitual to it in emergencies, appealed to the Powers for advice and did nothing.

Lord Salisbury was on his holiday at Puys. On the evening of the 19th he telegraphed direct from there to the Austrian, German, and Italian Governments, inviting them to join him in an immediate protest against this defiant tearing up of the Berlin Treaty. These Powers, seven years before, had all joined in forbidding the extension of Bulgaria south of the Balkans, and the invitation was probably intended to serve as a test of their present attitude.

Italy deferred her reply, but Germany and Austria intimated at once that, apart from its capacity for contagion, the event was indifferent to them. Lord Salisbury deduced an outcome of the still secret agreement between the three Emperors which had been come to that summer at Kremsier. He at once forewarned the Queen that the Prince, as the Czar's enemy, would probably be made accountable for the international offence. His own first impulse to pick up the question at the point at which he had left it when he quitted office was complicated from the outset by this novel personal element. Its importance was urged upon him from more than one quarter. Prince Alexander had made friends as well as enemies. The Crown Princess Frederick was one of them. To the intense indignation of her eldest son and of the great Chancellor, she had been encouraging his matrimonial addresses to one of her daughters, and her influence, combined with that of his own attractive qualities, had also enlisted her mother, Queen Victoria, among his champions. The Queen's sympathies were fortified to her sense of duty by her intimate appreciation of the tension of personal antagonism between him and his cousin,—a subject which lent itself to detailed comment in her family correspondence. The Prince's rule in Bulgaria, therefore, guaranteed a solid obstacle to Russia's advance, and on that ground, as well as on his own merits, he deserved support. By telegram and letter she at once urged upon her Minister that he should receive it unstintingly in his present adventure. Lord Salisbury was a little shocked at such an unexpected readiness to repudiate Lord Beaconsfield's settlement. His reply exemplifies the point of view from which he started, to arrive at a very different conclusion as he became more fully seized of new conditions during the next few weeks.

Telegram to the Queen,¹ September 24, 1885.

“ In considering the attitude of England as to the breach of Treaty of Berlin, it must be remembered that the maintenance of the Balkan frontier was the provision on which Lord Beaconsfield insisted at Berlin at the risk of war. If England now takes the lead in tearing up the arrangement which she forced on Europe seven years ago, her position will not be honourable and her influence will be much diminished. Wish for the Bulgarians for union was as well known then as it is now, and the danger of the big Bulgaria is not at all events diminished. Situation is embarrassing because of the extreme weakness of Turkey. Probability is that monarchies will not restore separation, but if they do, Great Britain cannot honourably oppose them. She would be stultifying herself. If the union is upheld, best practical issue will be that it should be a personal union in the Prince, institutions on each side remaining without change.”

In a letter written on the same day to Sir William White,² who was in temporary charge of the embassy at Constantinople, he reached the same conclusion from the opposite direction. Regretting the advent of a “ big Bulgaria ” for its probable reaction in hastening the final disintegration of Turkey, but expressing his belief that it had now become inevitable, he suggested that its restriction to the limited form of a personal union would be the most favourable compromise. He was preaching to the converted. This letter was crossed by a telegram from Sir William, warning his chief that the Prince’s elimination would mean the complete Russification of Bulgaria. He spoke with authority. His diplomatic career had been passed almost exclusively in south-eastern Europe and he had

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 692.

² 1824–1891. Consul-General at Belgrade, 1875–1879; Minister at Bucharest, 1879–1886; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1886–1891.

an unsurpassed knowledge of its internal politics. He had always advocated the encouragement of the young nationalities as heirs of the moribund Turk for their capacity to become barriers against the aggressive ambitions of their big neighbours. The moment seemed to have arrived when that policy might become practicable.

Lord Salisbury, not committing himself further, remained on at Puys till the end of the week. His experimental appeal had sufficiently shown the existence of new horizons and the need of cautious steering, and he enjoined upon his ambassador to keep in the background and refrain from all initiation of advice. The Sultan had willingly agreed to leave the Powers, signatories of the Berlin Treaty, to deal with the question, and the necessary European Conference was only awaiting its summons by the more immediately interested Powers.

It was not in Lord Salisbury, however, to remain entirely passive, and as soon as he returned to London on the 28th he proceeded to seek support from other Governments for the compromise of which he had spoken to the Queen and his ambassador. If Prince Alexander were appointed Governor-General of Eastern Roumelia for life, popular feeling, he suggested, might be satisfied at a minimum of disturbance to the existing order. The proposal was favourably received. In the first days of October, Germany and Austria signified their approval of it and so did France. As has since appeared, the Russian Foreign Minister discussed it with Prince Bismarck and did not reject it.¹ For a brief interval Lord Salisbury's letters express a hope that, for once, an ebullition in the Balkans might subside without merging into a European crisis.

But it was not for long. Bulgaria was not the only

¹ *Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. v. p. 10.

State in the Balkans, and in no other quarter of the globe does the "balance of power" command more whole-hearted adhesion as the embodiment of international justice. The Kings of Servia and Greece were in Vienna when the Philippopolis news reached them. They started at once for their respective capitals, breathing a resolved purpose of emulation which was passionately endorsed by their excited subjects. King George, before leaving Vienna, informed the British ambassador that he expected to be invited to the "liberation of Crete and elsewhere, and I shall certainly go. What's good for the Prince of Bulgaria is good for me!" The King of Servia did not wait for invitations. There was a Naboth's vineyard round Widdin, and an extension of territory in the direction of Nisch for which his people were already clamouring, with threats of deposition if their aspirations were not gratified.¹ He promised co-operation with admirable constitutional propriety, mobilised his army, and informed the Governments of Europe that unless Bulgaria were restricted to her original limits, he should at once march his troops across her frontier.

Austria was panic-stricken. She was urged independently from London, Paris, and Berlin, to coerce Servia into passivity. But Count Kalnoky frankly admitted that he dared not risk the loss of her friendship—she was at that time Austria's one client in the Peninsula. The Czar's inveterate anger against the ungrateful Bulgarians offered a way out. At the time of the outbreak of trouble he had been taking holiday with his wife's relations in Copenhagen. As soon as his views became effective on Russian decisions an immediate and drastic suppression of the Roumelian insurrection and of its instigator was demanded. Prince Bismarck tried for Lord Salis-

¹ *Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. v. p. 6.

bury's compromise—for a suspension of the personal vendetta against Prince Alexander : “ The situation is quite complicated enough as it is.”¹ But Servia's threatenings had been too much for Austrian nerves ; —the unique opportunity of satisfying her and at the same time pleasing Russia, was too good to be lost,— and the German Chancellor, true to his governing principle of keeping his neighbours together, accepted their decision.

So, on October 15, Count Kalmoky issued a circular to the Powers, announcing the basis on which the three Emperors had decided that the Conference should meet. Prince Alexander was to be summoned to withdraw at once beyond the Balkans : if he refused, the Christian Powers would no longer shield Roumelia from Turkish military repression. If he complied, they would consult with the Porte as to how far the institutions of the two provinces might be “ assimilated ”—but the word “ union ” was not to be mentioned. Lord Salisbury telegraphed back the same evening to Vienna and Berlin that on such a basis England would refuse to take part in the Conference. She could not make herself responsible for a Turkish military execution in Bulgaria.

That threat, combined with a certain dictatorial note in the Austrian invitation, may be taken as accounting for the uncompromising promptitude of this refusal. But there must have been a preliminary conclusion come to, witnessing to an intensive process of reconsideration having been in progress during those three weeks which followed his September telegram to the Queen. Its course and inspiration are not difficult to divine. The fact that Russia was now threatening Turkish “ military repression ” in the very province where, eight years before, she had gone

¹ *Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. v. pp. 13-14.

to war to avenge its atrocities, was only an extreme instance of the change of conditions which had made consistency obsolete. If the "monarchies" were insisting on the letter of the Berlin settlement, it was only with the purpose of defeating its object. Russia's domination in the eastern half of the Peninsula was as much aimed at now in opposing the union of Bulgaria as it had been aimed at seven years before in demanding it. The published intention to compel Prince Alexander's abandonment of Bulgaria south of the Balkans carried with it his certain repudiation by the northern principality. Lord Salisbury's own first prediction, Sir William White's emphatic warning, the Queen's quick alarm were all being justified in the event. Acquiescence would mean the abandonment of the policy of 1878 rather than its maintenance.

In a letter written to Lord Lyons the day after his rejection of the Imperial invitation, Lord Salisbury summarised his reasons for it :

" This proposal is obviously intended to upset Prince Alexander, and, if we acquiesce, we may find ourselves with a big Bulgaria under a Russian Prince. . . . And, I confess, I do not view with enthusiasm the prospect of a Turkish campaign of repression in Bulgaria under the sanction of a Conference." (*October 16, 1885.*)

The double motive was curiously coherent with his own past association with the question. The path which he had pursued in '76-77 in revolt against Turkish cruelty and misgovernment had been deflected in '78 by his refusal to accept Russia's domination at Constantinople. The same two inspirations were working together now in support of a single decision. They were reflected to a similar issue in the sentiments of his fellow-countrymen. The two

currents of feeling, whose opposition seven years before had made the Eastern Question the battleground of parties, now flowed in a single channel. Patriotic suspicion of Russia and sympathy with the subject races of Turkey were alike gratified by his champion-ship of Prince Alexander and the Bulgarians. Indeed, Count Hatzfeldt, in his despatches home, attributed Lord Salisbury's attitude—to him otherwise incom-prehensible—wholly to electioneering necessity. This is not the only instance—they were recurrent through-out his career—when even to onlookers of more subtlety of judgment than the ambassador, it might have been difficult to distinguish accurately between his own choice as the determining factor in his de-cisions and the pressure of national opinion, from the simple fact that their direction was identic.

But there was another reason which increasingly moved him, whose practical force would certainly have been appreciated by Count Hatzfeldt's master. The rebellious Roumelians and their Prince had not been idle since September 20. The consolidation of their illicit conjunction had proceeded without a check. Evidence had accumulated both as to the wishes of the population and the reality of the authority which their chosen ruler exercised over them,—even to the point of securing unbroken peace in the frontier villages. For a Balkan population to accept restraint from raiding indicated a very absolute submission. Lord Salisbury had become convinced of what the passions of one Emperor and the panic alarms of the other prevented them from realising,—that a united Bulgaria had passed from a debatable political pro-ject into an accomplished and irremovable fact.

It was this last conviction that must be taken as mainly accounting for the confident equanimity with which he faced the long struggle which followed. His

chosen policy involved him in a single-handed resistance to what soon became the unanimous demand of continental Europe ; Governments for whose friendship he was anxious pressed him repeatedly to abandon it ; colleagues doubted ; his own trusted agent at Constantinople protested against a continuance of the fight against such odds ; the immediacy of its success was, in fact, due to a development which he could not have foreseen. But not only was he obstinate in his adherence to it, but his correspondence shows no trace of uneasiness as to the issue. The sum could only work out in one way, and there was no need, therefore, to worry over its progress towards solution.

The quarrel which prevented the assembling of the Conference was, after some discussion, postponed to a later stage. The Sultan issued invitations unhampered by any condition beyond a vague declaration of loyalty to the Treaty of Berlin, without prejudice to the question of its alteration, and Lord Salisbury withdrew his *non possumus*.

The ambassadors on the spot were to be the plenipotentiaries. The Sultan, though suspicious of his Imperial neighbours, had, after some hesitation, ranged himself at their side and prepared for "execution" by mobilising his army on the Roumelian frontier. He was compelled to this decision, he pleaded, by his dread of what Servia and Greece might do, and Lord Salisbury responded with a warning which proved prophetic. "The next time, Bulgaria will arrange with Servia and Greece beforehand, and organise a combined attack which will be fatal to Turkey." Italy announced adhesion to the same course, and when the Conference met, France—admittedly passive—was the only country which had not declared itself hostile to the British attitude.

It met on November 7 and the issue discussed did

not materially change during its progress. The Russian ambassador demanded that all other business should be postponed to a summons to the Roumelians to return to legality, and to the Prince and his north Bulgarian troops to withdraw beyond the Balkans. Sir William White retorted with a counter proposal that the Conference's first act should be the appointment of a Commission to enquire into the wishes of the population. The Imperial representatives declared that no enquiry would be admissible unless restricted beforehand to recommendations in accordance with the actual provisions of the Berlin Treaty : " If we are to preclude ourselves from amending existing Treaties in any particular," was Lord Salisbury's dry comment, " I do not see the utility of a Conference." (*November 22.*)

The majority representatives expressed themselves freely in private as to the outrage of this single-handed obstruction to the wishes of the Powers immediately concerned, and threatened reprisals. Sir William reported that " great pressure " was being put upon him,—that matters had become very serious,—that unless some compromise could be effected our influence in Constantinople would finally disappear,—that there was imminent danger of the Conference breaking up and of Austria and Russia taking the settlement of the question into their own hands. Lord Salisbury replied that he was fully sensible both of the possibility and the evil of such an issue, but that it would be preferable to allowing England " to be dragged in the wake of the three Empires " in sanctioning armed repression by Turkey of a Christian population. Almost in the same words he met appeals of the German ambassador to abandon his resistance for the sake of preserving the peace of Europe, and protests of Lord Randolph Churchill as to the mis-

chief of exasperating Russia in view of our difficulties in Central Asia. There was, indeed, an inevitable monotony in his correspondence during this period,—his diplomatic communications being restricted to more or less elaborate variations on the theme of “No, I won’t!” A letter, written after this stage of the question had passed, shows what had been the nature and limits of his dependence while it was in progress.

To Sir Robert Morier, December 2, 1885.

“The issue from the beginning to the end, under various forms, has been whether we would or would not pledge ourselves against any alteration of the Treaty of Berlin. We have steadily declined to do so until some account had been taken of the desires of the inhabitants of the Provinces concerned. The three Empires entirely declined to take any account of the wishes of the populations, and Turkey denounced the idea as contrary to ‘les idées conservatrices’ now dominant in Europe. I was quite willing to have put off the day of decision by avoiding, in the formula appointing the Commission of Enquiry, any engagement as to the making or not making of changes in the Treaty. But the Russians would not allow any vagueness or doubtfulness in the pledge that the Treaty should not be altered—and Austria, Germany, and Italy have followed her blindly. I do not understand what the Russians intend to do. I doubt very much whether any amount of Resolutions or ‘som�tions’ or other forms of bluster will induce the Roumelians to give in. If that is so, then material force must be used. Neither Austria nor Russia can allow the other to send troops into Bulgaria—and if they induce the Sultan to do it, will Russian public opinion acquiesce? Whether they do or not, we can do nothing but stand aside if they go in for a policy of blank repression. I think Turkey is making a great mistake. An independent national feeling might be

got up in Bulgaria that, joined to that already existing in Roumania, might make the Russian passage to Constantinople very difficult."

A week before this letter was written the struggle in Conference had culminated. The majority representatives had submitted resolutions which embodied their final concessions. An enquiry into the wishes of the population was included, but only in so far as these did not require any alteration in the Berlin Treaty. France acquiesced, and Sir William, finding himself entirely alone, devised a formula of compromise which he urged upon his chief's acceptance. But he was met by a brief telegraphic refusal, with instructions to confine himself to an amendment directly excluding the proposed limitation. This was moved and unanimously rejected by the other six plenipotentiaries on November 25. The Conference adjourned *sine die*, and the Imperial representatives proceeded to concert with the Porte the independent action which they had threatened.

But things were already happening elsewhere which deprived these threats of all importance. During the last day or two, Lord Salisbury's pertinacity had been buttressed by a more visible assurance of success than had been available at the outset. On the 14th of the month, Servia, weary of the delays of the great Powers, had declared war upon Bulgaria, and a day or two later had marched troops across her frontier. "The blame of this war rests with Austria," Lord Salisbury bluntly declared to the indignant Austrian ambassador. The Bulgarian army had never yet been under fire ; as the Russians who had drilled and hitherto commanded it had been ordered back to their own country, it was led by an extemporised corps of officers ; it was, moreover, far less numerous

than that of its opponents, and it is not surprising therefore that a Servian victory was foretold as certain. Lord Salisbury reported to the Queen that the foreign ambassadors were unanimous to that effect. They proved mistaken. The fighting was of that simple and unsophisticated type in which leadership and morale count for everything. Prince Alexander led his enthusiastic followers into action, exposed himself with brilliant courage and, at Slivnitz, on the 19th, defeated the Servian army with great loss. He followed up his victory with a rapid series of successful attacks, and within a fortnight of the invasion was pursuing his enemies, a routed and demoralised mob, across the frontier into their own country.

“The issue in the Balkan peninsula will really be decided by arms,” wrote Lord Salisbury to the Queen, when the news of Slivnitz reached him: “if Prince Alexander continues to fight as well as he has hitherto done, it will be impossible for Russia to separate the Bulgarias.” (*November 20.*)

The gods had verily declared in his favour, though in Constantinople itself it was some time before the irate representatives of a defied continent could realise the finality of the check received. Roumelia had been left defenceless by the departure of all fighting men to the Servian frontier, and acting upon the advice of the Russian and Austrian ambassadors, the Porte sent delegates to Philippopolis to demand submission. They were armed with a proclamation, claiming to be supported by the five Christian Powers, and threatening, if submission was refused, instant coercion by the Turkish troops already gathered on the frontier. But a gun, even when loaded, is useless to a man who dare not pull the trigger. The Prefect of Philippopolis

calmly referred the delegates to Prince Alexander at Sofia for an answer,—and the proclamation was never even published. The policy which it represented was already crumbling. The Servian menace had constituted its only arguable basis, and the conversion of European opinion, which was effected by the elimination of that menace, was ludicrous in its rapidity. The French and Italian Governments hurriedly repudiated any authorisation of Turkish military action, and by the middle of December the former had officially declared its adherence to the British policy in its entirety, and the latter, more deeply committed, was openly and anxiously searching for a bridge of retreat. The official press of Hungary, which had hitherto been clamouring for armed repression in Roumelia, made an unabashed *volte-face* and published articles hailing England as the saviour of Europe through her foresight in preventing it. In Russia itself, the victory of her ancient clients produced a movement of elation which justified Lord Salisbury's scepticism as to the possibility of her Government's ever having been able to assist in their forcible suppression.

Meanwhile a more powerful supporter had come into the open. Prince Bismarck had never pretended to any independent enthusiasm for the policy of his allies. He may, indeed, have shared Lord Salisbury's opinion as to the hopeless dilemma which Russia was preparing for herself, and been none the less willing to support her decision. As the controversy advanced his ambassador had become more insistent as to Germany's detachment from the merits of the question, and as to the Chancellor's hope that it would not be suffered to militate against the continuance of Anglo-German friendship. On the other hand, the German representative at Constantinople, Count Radowitz, still maintained a bitterly anti-English attitude, and

Sir William White was troubled at the contradiction between his chief's reports and his own experience. Lord Salisbury offered an explanation :

To Sir William White, December 2, 1885.

"Hatzfeldt is exceedingly pleasant and sees the question perfectly clearly. His tone is that of Olympian indifference. He cares nothing about the Balkan States, but is only concerned to prevent the Russians and Austrians from fighting. Malet assures me that Bismarck in secret approves of our policy, wishes the Russians to be checkmated, but *more suo* prefers that someone else should pull the chestnuts out. Meanwhile he is laying up a good store of merit in Russian eyes by the conduct of Radowitz at Constantinople. I think this must be the true explanation ; it is so like the man."

He had no illusions as to the German chief. "Prince Bismarck's plan of speaking through different channels is very perplexing and by no means reassuring," he wrote to the Queen on December 11. "He means evidently to hoodwink somebody or he would not conceal so much. Is it Russia or England that is to be hoodwinked ?" But events had smoothed the Chancellor's path and "hoodwinking" in either direction was no longer necessary. To continue paying lip-service to a policy of whose breakdown even its authors had become conscious would advantage no one. He now appealed directly to the British Minister to co-operate with him in effecting the legalisation of the Bulgarian union at as small a cost as possible of humiliation to his two allies. Lord Salisbury was quite willing. After some abortive attempts to construct face-saving resolutions for submission to a resuscitated Conference, the two collaborators concentrated their efforts upon securing a separate agree-

ment between the victorious Prince and the Sultan. It was felt that to give formal sanction to terms already conceded by a suzerain to his vassal would be less painful to the feelings of Russian representatives than to have themselves to assist in drawing up a repudiation of their own policy in Conference. "There is a general lull," wrote Lord Salisbury to Sir Robert Morier on January 6, "produced partly by an inclination to wait till French and English politics have unfolded themselves, and partly by the consciousness of Austria and Russia that they have made a mistake and a wish to allow a little time to be interposed before they beat a retreat, which seems inevitable." There might be risk in too far prolonging the pause as, with the advent of spring, the fighting instincts of the Balkan races would reassert themselves. But conceding that limit, "Europe may now rest for a couple of months watching the interesting process of a Czar recovering his temper."

Whether with or without that condition, Europe had not so long to wait. The task of inducing Prince Alexander to conciliation was left to Lord Salisbury. It was not difficult to persuade him to a courteously humble appeal to the Sultan for recognition : it was harder to obtain the gesture, also humble, of reconciliation with the Czar which Prince Bismarck urged as necessary. Lord Salisbury had no wish for anything beyond a gesture. There was talk of the Russians indemnifying themselves for their diplomatic defeat by a re-erection of their machinery of interference in the united province. The Prince was recalcitrant, and his political mentor, in a message sent through Windsor, supported him in that disposition :

"The present game of the Russian Cabinet is to sell a large concession of Bulgarian unity in exchange for a restoration of Russian influence and Russian

officers in Bulgaria. The Prince will be very unwise if he concedes any portion of these demands ; for he will get the Union without them." (*January 14, 1886.*)

Germany led the way in the more laborious task of persuading the Porte to reasonableness and promptitude, supported by her now humbled henchman at Vienna and with the tacit, though still sullen, acquiescence of Russia. But an unpromising emergency enabled Lord Salisbury to render effective help in this direction also. Greece had been more dilatory than her Slav neighbour in the assertion of her claim to "compensation," but about Christmas she had reached the stage of threatening a naval descent on the Turkish coasts. The Austro-Servian precedent was not followed. Europe was exasperated at this fresh threat of disturbance, and when Lord Salisbury invited other Governments to join him in forbidding the attack, he met with a unanimous consent. A British squadron, accompanied by one or two ships of other nations, was ordered to the Piræus, and Lord Salisbury telegraphed to report to the Turkish Government what he had done, adding, however, a significant postscript:

" Inform Porte that England has procured joint action of Powers to forbid attack by Greece on Turkey by sea. But the vigour of our support entirely depends on Turkey coming to an immediate agreement with Prince Alexander and not insisting on extravagant terms. . . . Make it very clearly understood that Turkey must not count on our support unless she agrees with Bulgaria. Germany, I have good ground for believing, takes the same view." (*January 25, 1886.*)

The defeat of the Conservative Government in the House of Commons had by this time become a certainty of the near future, and the prospect was

utilised as a further diplomatic weapon. The Porte was advised to make terms with its adversaries quickly, before the British Foreign Office passed into the hands of its old enemies, the Liberal party.

These combined pressures were so far successful that, when Lord Salisbury resigned office a fortnight later, an agreement had been signed between suzerain and vassal which secured the union of the two provinces, though, as the event proved, it did not save the Prince from the vendetta sworn against him at St. Petersburg.

This episode has been dealt with at some length since it had an influence on Lord Salisbury's reputation abroad which was out of proportion to its importance. He profited, no doubt, by force of contrast. The part played by continental Governments, whether in the earlier or the later stages of the story, had not been a creditable one. Jealous anger and tremulous panic, followed by the collapse of gamblers whose bluff has been called, do not make a dignified equipment for great Powers in the act of dictating conduct to young and dependent nations. The one Government which had stood altogether aside from such incompetent handling had gained in repute from that fact alone. But the change which was witnessed to by the gossip of the day was of a more personal quality. It was partly, no doubt, due to a success, for the spectacular element in which,—for the sudden transition for England from contemned singularity to applauded leadership,—Lord Salisbury was largely indebted to the military gifts of the "hero of Slivnitz." But before success came he had made his individual will felt against a unanimous opposition : he had given evidence of an initiative, a self-confidence, and an obstinacy which had compelled attention. In the years that followed, the question, when canvassed

between chancelleries, of "what England would do" came more and more to take the form of "how Lord Salisbury would decide." He had been admitted among the number of those select few whose personalities, in and by themselves, count in international affairs.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VIII

SUMMARY OF THE MEMORANDUM, BY SIR PHILIP CURRIE, OF HIS CONVERSATIONS WITH PRINCE BISMARCK, SEPTEMBER 28-30, 1885

AFTER expressing a hope that the Conservative Government would obtain a majority at the approaching elections because "Mr. Gladstone knew nothing of foreign affairs and was impossible to do business with," Prince Bismarck referred to his own recent attitude of unfriendliness towards England in different parts of the world. It had originated, he said, in his efforts to effect a reconciliation with France and dissuade her from her obsession of revenge. He had persevered in the hope of achieving this, he declared, for fifteen years, but had now finally decided to abandon it as useless. "He washed his hands of France," and henceforth would side with England in any question that divided the two countries. His support, he pointed out, would be useful, as France would never dare to risk a breach with England if it was known to involve danger on her eastern frontier.

There remained now no grounds for difference between Germany and England. As far as Colonies went, he had got all he wanted, and already more, he believed, than Germany could digest. He had never favoured the Colonial idea himself, but popular opinion in its favour was so strong that "he could not refrain from turning the Colonial stream into the main channel of his Parliamentary policy."

He could prevent any attack from France upon England,—but as regarded Russia, he could only offer neutrality. He could not afford to quarrel with her. A war with her would be more serious for Germany than a war with France, because, however victorious German arms might be, her geographical conditions would make it infinitely difficult to bring her to terms. His permanent dread was a war between Russia and Austria. If Germany remained neutral, the defeated Power, whichever it might be, would never forgive her. Then Russia would very likely win, and a defeat would break up Austria and annihilate her as an integral Power. He had no wish to annex her German provinces ; they were Catholic and mixed in nationality and would be a weakness to Germany. On the other hand, he could not afford to have Russia at Vienna.

Charged by Sir Philip with having violated Germany's neutrality as between England and Russia by sharing in the advice recently given to the Sultan to close the Straits in the event of an Anglo-Russian war, he, in Sir Philip's view, "defended himself rather lamely." He said that when his opinion was asked, he had to admit that Turkey would not be justified under existing treaties in letting the British fleet through unless she was herself a belligerent.

As to the revolt in Eastern Roumelia (which had broken out only the week before), he said that the position was rendered abnormal by Russia's hatred of Prince Alexander. That made her oppose the Bulgarian union which she had always supported, while Austria, who had always resisted it, now seemed disposed to agree to it. He had not yet made up his mind on the subject, but spoke favourably of the idea of a personal union under Prince Alexander. Sir Philip reported to him that, in Lord Salisbury's opinion, since the Turks had failed to take action at the outset, the Union could not now be undone, but that he attached importance to the two provinces maintaining different constitutions. It would give

the Prince an added security personally, and the existing Bulgarian constitution was "unworkable."

In a later conversation, the Chancellor complained that any treaty with England was uncertain since, when there was a change of Ministry, it might not be considered binding. Sir Philip denied this, and asked him if he could say, in fact, that England had proved less faithful to treaties than other nations. He answered that he would not say that—but there was the Luxemburg Treaty which the Minister of the day in England had explained away almost as soon as it was signed. "Would England fight if Belgium was attacked?" he asked. Sir Philip replied, "No doubt, if she had an ally," and reminded him of the steps taken by Mr. Gladstone's Government in 1870 to secure the neutrality of Belgium. He said, "Yes,—but new treaties were thought necessary." Sir Philip then repeated that, ever since he had been at the Foreign Office, Belgium and Constantinople had been looked upon as questions about which England would fight. Though she might not now be prepared, unsupported, to engage in war with Russia for the latter object, she would no doubt do so if other Powers were ready to join her.

Prince Bismarck still demurred. Austrian statesmen had been convinced, by Mr. Gladstone's repudiation of his predecessor's policy in 1880, that no trust was to be placed in England. The same thing might happen again. Mr. Gladstone's visit to the Czar at Copenhagen a year later had put the seal on this suspicion. Sir Philip, while declining to defend Mr. Gladstone's election denunciations of Austria, said that they were inspired by what he conceived to be her attitude towards the Christian races of Turkey and did not imply any rejection of England's settled policy as regarded Constantinople. He believed that, in opposing a Russian occupation of that city, even Mr. Gladstone would be prepared to act with Austria.

There ensued a long discussion as to what would be the result of Russia's obtaining possession of

Constantinople. Prince Bismarck contended that it would hurt no one but herself, though admitting that his Austrian friends did not agree with that view. It would dangerously extend her frontier for defence. The idea of making Constantinople the capital of a new Eastern Empire was a dream. It would never be more than an outpost. The security of the Czar's throne depended on his continuing to live in the midst of the Russian peasantry. The country was seething with revolution; steeped in corruption; militarily worthless. "If she were not on the frontiers of Germany he should not trouble about her at all." He recurred again to the impossibility of bringing a war with her to a termination. But she was militarily worthless; unconquerable in defence but despicable in attack. Sir Philip urged the evil that must accrue to Germany as well as to Austria if the Slav populations of the Balkans were brought altogether under her rule, and no answer appears to have been made to this argument. England, Sir Philip admitted, was interested only in the general injury which would follow such an increase of Russia's prestige in the Near East and in the closing of the Black Sea—where alone her flank could be struck at in the event of her attacking India. Prince Bismarck dismissed this as an illusion. The Caucasus was an impenetrable barrier; Russia would be quite indifferent to the bombardment of Odessa; she was more vulnerable in the Baltic than in the Black Sea. She was incapable of becoming a formidable naval power.

Sir Philip notes in connection with this part of the conversation that, while the Chancellor's language occasionally betrayed distrust of Austria, his tone towards Russia was one of dislike and contempt.

There was a brief reference to Egypt. Sir Philip told Prince Bismarck that Lord Salisbury was opposed to its permanent occupation, but could not at present fix a date for evacuation, and considered that England ought to retain a privileged position there and a right of re-entry in the event of disturbance. Prince Bis-

marck had no objection to offer from Germany's point of view, but said that such a policy would be unsafe for England—the existence of the Suez Canal made it essential for her to hold Egypt.

He told Sir Philip that he was sending Count Hatzfeldt to London—the one of his diplomats in whom he had the greatest confidence—to replace Count Münster. Count Münster, who was too fond of hunting and riding to pay enough attention to business, was to be transferred to Paris :—“ It did not much matter who the German representative there was, now that he had given up any idea of improving the relations of Germany with France.” The insistence on this change of attitude reappeared at the close of the visit when, upon some allusion to Italy, he congratulated himself that “ now that he had broken with France he should find his relations with Italy much easier.”

CHAPTER IX

THE GENERAL ELECTION, 1885

THE history of home politics during the Ministry of 1885 was practically that of a prolonged election campaign. The electioneering appeal had, in fact, been prominent on public platforms for some months before the change of Government. The Liberal battle-front was an extended one, with sober Whigs on the right wing whose views could hardly be differentiated from those of Conservatives, and a left wing whose extremists found even Mr. Chamberlain's "unauthorised programme" unadventurous. The country was suffering from a severe depression in trade, as to whose ultimate origin politicians and economists were as usual hopelessly at sea. But Lord Salisbury urged that it had been needlessly aggravated by the actual and threatened attacks upon property in which his opponents had been indulging. He argued this thesis repeatedly in his platform speeches.

"When bad times come, and when the question in every man's mind arises whether he shall invest his capital in an industry or not, there comes up the doubt, — 'Had I not better be careful what I do, with the temper that prevails in Parliament? I know they have passed Act after Act, with whatever motive, that has diminished our profits hitherto. How can I know that they will not pass Acts of the same character in future?' And this tendency becomes much more

dangerous when the policy of Parliament approaches, in ever so small a degree, to the character of confiscation. If there is in the legislation a tendency dishonestly to interfere with the rights of men for the purpose of gaining parliamentary or electioneering strength, the evil is not confined to the number of people whom such conduct injures. The evil spreads throughout the community. A feeling of fear attaches itself to all enterprises upon which the capitalist is invited to embark, and many more industries suffer than those which are affected by the particular legislation to which I refer.” (*Dumfries, October 21, 1884.*)

As the elections approached, he addressed himself to the same subject with a direct party application :

“ I want to point out to you what seems to me to be the fundamental difference between Conservative and Radical proposals at the present time. The Conservative desire is so to manage affairs, so to remove all restrictions, so to give the necessary stimulus to industry, that you shall advance forward to conquer new realms of industry yet uninvaded ; that you shall obtain an entry to markets which are now closed to you ; that, in short, the well-being of the working man shall be obtained by providing him with fresh material for his industry, and giving him an opportunity of finding in the wealth which that industry will create ample satisfaction of all his wants. The Conservative points the working man forward to obtain wealth which is as yet uncreated. The Radical —at least, the Radical as shown by recent discussions —on the contrary, turns his eyes backwards, does not tell him to create new sources of wealth, but says that the wealth which has already been obtained is badly divided, that some have got something, that others have got nothing at all, and that the real remedy is to look back and fight among yourselves for the wealth that has already been obtained.

“ Now, I am not here speaking for the rich man.

He will defend himself, and you will find him a very hard nut to crack. I am not defending him. I am speaking of the benefit of the community, and especially of the provision of work and of wages for the working man. And I say that the fatal defect of this Radical finance, which asks you to think of ‘ransom’ and ‘restitution’ instead of looking forward to reaping new wealth by carrying your industry into new markets and making the community richer as a whole,—its fatal defect is that it will prevent that development of industry, and for the sake of the wretched morsel which, by disorder, by departing from all the traditions of good government, by destroying all confidence, you may be able to divide,—it makes it an impossibility for you to find work and to obtain wages in the future.” (*Victoria Hall, Lambeth, November 4, 1885.*)

On October 7, in a speech addressed to a meeting of the National Union at Newport, he formally announced the programme on which the Cabinet proposed to appeal to the electorate. The two principal pieces of legislation adumbrated were, a measure for reducing, by means of a State grant, the fees which were then payable in elementary schools,—which he defended as a piece of justice to the parents whom we had compelled to send their children to them,—and the creation of what were then spoken of as “County Boards” for purposes of local administration. The latter subject was equally prominent in his opponents’ speeches. Like most measures of practical legislation, it originated in an automatic development of national life, generally acquiesced in, and party differences appeared only in the points of view from which it was approached. Liberals hailed the deposition of the Quarter Sessions in favour of representative bodies for its theoretic value as a democratic advance; Radicals extolled it as opening the way to further

assaults upon property ; Lord Salisbury accepted it as a necessary condition for the achievement of a decentralisation of government which he had long and strongly desired : " That I claim to be a special Tory doctrine which we have held through good report and evil report for many and many a generation. It has always been our contention that people in their own localities should govern themselves." In private, he admitted doubts as to whether in rural districts the proposed bodies would be as efficient as Quarter Sessions in administration, but declared that it would be the fault of the squires themselves if they did not maintain their influence under the new conditions. When it was suggested that they might not be willing to take the trouble of submitting themselves for election, he answered with warmth that, if that were so, their influence was not worth preserving. Privilege which claimed exemption from struggle never appealed to his sympathies.

His anticipations of the local independence which the change would promote have scarcely been fulfilled. Their disappointment has been largely involved in the other aspect of the problem upon which he also dwelt at Newport,—the necessity of relief to the ratepayer. All sources of wealth, he urged with unanswerable logic, ought to share in the burden which now lay so heavily upon agriculture. His own and subsequent Governments have striven to mitigate that injustice by a continual extension of the system of Treasury grants,—with the inevitable result of a progressive subjugation of the rating to the taxing authority.

The enemy specialised in their appeal to the new county electors through a series of proposals for land reform, ranging from modest demands on the part of the right wing for the cheapening of transfer to sugges-

tions in the “unauthorised programme” for the extension of the three F’s to England, and the provision of “three acres and a cow” for every agricultural labourer. The Tory leader declined competition for the rural vote along these lines, and made fun of the town-bred propagandists for the ignorance of their subject which they displayed. “If you hand the land over to inveterate cockneys who know nothing of it but what they have read in magazines, you will only make ten times worse the evils you attempt to cure.” He especially derided the view that landowners had an interest in maintaining cumbersome conditions of title. “Lawyers’ bills are as odious to the squire as to other members of the human race.” He was ready to support a compulsory registration of ownership and a shortening of the period of prescription,—but was not hopeful that these or any other expedients would materially cheapen transfer. “Mr. Goschen has told us that the transfer of land can be made as cheap and easy as that of Consols,—an observation which proves that Mr. Goschen knows more about Consols than he does about land.” As regarded the provision of peasant properties, he had always regretted their disappearance from this country and had repeatedly expressed that regret. But to legislate for their restoration in the face of their steady diminution,—a diminution which had, under the pressure of economic forces, been in progress now for more than a century,—was to legislate against natural laws. “Supposing you saw a hillside upon which the larch had grown and the beech had died, what would you think of the man who said, ‘I will cut down the larch and plant beech?’” The truth which had to be faced was that that which had been prophesied at the time when the Corn Laws were abolished had, after long delay, come to pass, and the growing of wheat

had become unprofitable. Land would have to be utilised more and more in large pasture farms.

It was not an encouraging presentment and it is scarcely surprising that the rural voter in this first exercise of his franchise should have preferred the roseate illusions of Radical canvassers. They added menace to incitement. A “Fair Trade” group had come into being in the Conservative party during the late Parliament. The Liberals proclaimed the “cheap loaf” to be in danger and effectually alarmed the village labourers by prophecies of a return to the “hungry forties,” whose tradition was still vivid on the country-side. Lord Salisbury repudiated the accusation for himself and his colleagues with curt emphasis : “It’s a thumping lie !” He had already made his position clear on the subject at Welshpool the previous spring, when supporting a demand of his “Fair Trade” followers for an enquiry into the cause of the existing trade depression,—an enquiry which the Liberal Government had refused, as savouring of irreverence to the infallibility of Free Trade doctrine. Lord Salisbury had mocked this fanaticism of orthodoxy and had indicated various directions in which such enquiry would be useful. But he had, at the same time, made clear his own view that one feature of our present fiscal system was closed to alteration :

“I wish to say plainly that, in giving effect to this opinion, I am not glancing at the possibility of any re-imposition of the duty upon corn. I do not myself believe that such a thing is possible, because the amount of corn that we produce is so very short of the amount necessary to feed our people that I do not think that the vast body of consumers in this country would ever endure a re-imposition of the duties on corn. And, even if they would endure it, I have grave doubts

whether it would be for the advantage of the agricultural interest, because it is obvious that such a change of policy would always be exposed to being reversed in the case of any political change of fortunes, and the only effect of re-imposing the duty would be this : that you would induce farmers to spend money on improvements which would turn out to be a dead loss to them if the protection, on the faith of which they had changed their conduct, were ultimately to be reversed by some alteration in the balance of political parties. . . . I wanted to say this because, whenever we venture to question the fiscal policy of the Liberal Government . . . we are always told that we are landowners seeking to get a renewal of the duty on corn to increase our rents. I want to clear that matter away entirely. I am *not* in favour of a re-imposition of the duty on corn." (*Welshpool, April 22, 1885.*)

The place which " cheap bread " occupied as the subject for emotional appeal on the Liberal side in the campaign was filled on that of their opponents by a summons to the defence of the Established Church in England, Scotland, and Wales. Lord Salisbury devoted his perorations both at Newport and in his subsequent speeches to the sounding of this summons, and they were marked by the eloquence of genuine feeling. He was accused of prostituting a great cause to a party manœuvre in thus forcing the subject to the front. But non-political friends of the Church upheld his action and protested that the manœuvring had all been on the other side. It was true that Disestablishment, except as regarded Wales, had no place on the authorised Liberal programme, but it was discovered by Churchmen that the Liberationist Society had unobtrusively pledged two-thirds of the Liberal candidates in England and Wales, and four-fifths of those in Scotland to its support. Mr. Chamberlain had

frankly advocated it and Mr. Gladstone had evaded repudiation of it when challenged. The defence was taken up with unanimity and enthusiasm on every Conservative platform, and though its influence upon the general result was not sufficient to neutralise the other forces at work, it proved strong enough to secure its own final victory. The Scottish Church still remained for some years a subject for occasional attack, but, as a result, one may assume, of the canvassing reports sent in to Liberal headquarters at this election, the Disestablishment of the English Church disappeared thenceforward from the political field of conflict,—whatever may be its future fate in the ecclesiastical one.

The Irish question was dealt with at Newport, though not prominently. Lord Salisbury defended his Government for not re-enacting the Peace Preservation Act on the double plea of impossibility and uselessness. Crimes of actual violence had practically ceased in Ireland,—boycotting, widely prevalent, and become the instrument of a steadily growing power in the National League, was the pressing evil. But it had grown up under the present Act and the Act had proved impotent for its suppression. He argued the difficulty of dealing with it directly by legislative action, but concluded : “ I believe that a Parliament and Government possessing a full mandate will be bound above everything to exhaust every possible remedy in order that men may pursue freely their lawful industry.”

To Home Rule he referred only at the close of a discussion on a point which was much in dispute at the time as to the possibility of extending to Ireland the same system of local government as was proposed for Great Britain. Mr. Chamberlain was advocating in his speeches the establishment of Provincial Councils

in Ireland, and there is one sentence of Lord Salisbury's which suggests, rather fugitively, a consideration of that alternative. He said that his first principle would be to give Ireland everything that England had :

“ But I fully recognise that, in the case of local institutions especially, there is one element of consideration which in the state of Ireland you cannot leave out of mind. Local authorities are more exposed to the temptation of enabling the majority to be unjust to the minority when they obtain jurisdiction over a small area, than is the case when the authority derives its sanction and extends its jurisdiction over a wider area. It would be impossible to leave out of sight, in the extension of any such local authority to Ireland, the fact that the population is on several subjects deeply divided and that it is the duty of every Government on all matters of essential justice to protect the minority against the majority.”

Then followed a final paragraph :

“ With respect to the larger organic questions connected with Ireland I cannot say much, though I can speak emphatically. I have nothing to say but that the traditions of the party to which we belong are on this subject clear and distinct, and you may rely upon it that our party will not depart from them. We look upon the integrity of the Empire as a matter more important than almost any other political consideration that you can imagine, and we could not regard with favour any proposal which directly or indirectly menaced that which is the first condition of England's position among the nations of the world.” (*Newport, October 7, 1885.*)

He added, with reference to a suggestion which had been made for dealing with the question on the lines of Imperial Federation, that he had never seen any plan which gave him at present the slightest

ground for anticipating "that a solution could be found in that direction."

Mr. Gladstone is said to have interpreted these passages as having been deliberately worded so as to leave the way open for the subsequent adoption of a policy directly opposite to the one which they superficially indicated. He presumably excused the clumsiness of the performance as being the speaker's first attempt at a form of political subtlety in which he had never hitherto indulged, which he had always denounced, and which was as alien to his temper and ideas of leadership as it was to his record. It is perfectly true, on the other hand, that both these sentences and those referring to the Peace Preservation Act, though unqualified in substance, were marked by a cautious choice of wording which was not in keeping with the challenging militancy of his ordinary style. They witnessed, in fact, to the employment of an art in which, unlike the other, he had had large experience. At the Foreign Office he was familiar with the task of stating a distasteful decision inoffensively. He had to place clearly on record the principles and limitations by which the Irish policy of his party would be controlled without using such notably provocative phrases as would, at the moment, make Lord Carnarvon's administrative task harder, or needlessly interfere with Mr. Parnell's vindictive purpose against the Liberals.

His subsequent speeches at this time contain no reference to Ireland, and there was nothing in the electioneering debate to invite discussion of the subject. Mr. Gladstone was the only leading statesman who gave it any considerable place in his oratory, and his references to it were not of a kind to stimulate either concurrence or opposition. The only point upon which he insisted was the necessity of returning

a Liberal majority large enough to deal with the Irish question independently of the Parnellite vote ; but as to the use he would make of this independence when achieved, he was impenetrably obscure. Lord Hartington and Mr. Goschen took occasion emphatically to repudiate any suggestion of Home Rule. Mr. Chamberlain, without dwelling much on the subject, rejected Mr. Parnell's demand for Colonial autonomy and spoke of Provincial Councils. But these pronouncements failed to draw from their chief either assent or contradiction. When Mr. Parnell called upon him to state clearly, " yes or no," what concessions he was prepared to make to Nationalist aspirations, he specifically refused to reply. The Irish leader retorted by a savage manifesto, denouncing the late Government and all its works and inviting Irishmen everywhere to give their votes against Liberal candidates. What precise effect this manifesto had upon the issue remained a secret of the ballot-box. Conservative wire-pullers affirmed that Irish voters in British constituencies paid no attention to it but voted Liberal, as they had always done. Liberal wire-pullers, on the other hand, credited it with the loss to their party of twenty seats.¹

In its larger outlines the results of the election were in no way mysterious. Whether or no Lord Salisbury had been justified in attributing the Liberal zeal for a new county electorate to a wish to escape judgment for their misdeeds, that was in effect its result. The elections opened with sweeping Conservative victories among the old voters in the boroughs,—to be followed a week later by equally

¹ The evidence of local results in the general election which followed six months later so far supported the Conservative contention. The Irish vote was then unquestionably given to the Liberals, but in the three great cities where it was strongest—London, Glasgow, and Liverpool—they did worse than they had done on this occasion.

sweeping victories for their opponents among the new voters in the counties.¹ The Conservative party improved its position on the balance, but was still eighty-four votes behind the Liberal party in Great Britain. Mr. Parnell brought back from Ireland a compact body of eighty-five followers pledged absolutely to do his will. The Liberals had a substantial majority over the Conservatives, but were one short of a majority of the whole House and could only hold office by leave of the Irish Nationalists. That was the situation, pregnant with vital issues for the future of the Empire, which had been unwittingly created by five million helpless electors, who, torn between the appeals of cheap bread, three acres and a cow, or the maintenance of the Establishment and expiation for the death of Gordon, had never given so much as a thought to Ireland or the Irish question. The success of representative institutions is certainly not dependent on the logic with which they operate.

The week which saw the final development of the electoral struggle synchronised with the triumph of Lord Salisbury's policy in the Bulgarian quarrel and Prince Bismarck's offer to co-operate in its settlement in accordance with his views. The Queen was in dismay at the disaster threatened to the consummation of this notable diplomatic victory. One way of escape presented itself to her. Though the Opposition as a whole had won at the polls, the Radical wing of it had not. During the election campaign the division of opinion between it and the moderate Liberals had been accentuated to the point of scandal. Mr. Chamberlain's criticisms upon the Whig leaders and their retorts upon his "unauthorised programme" had formed the most notable features of their oratory

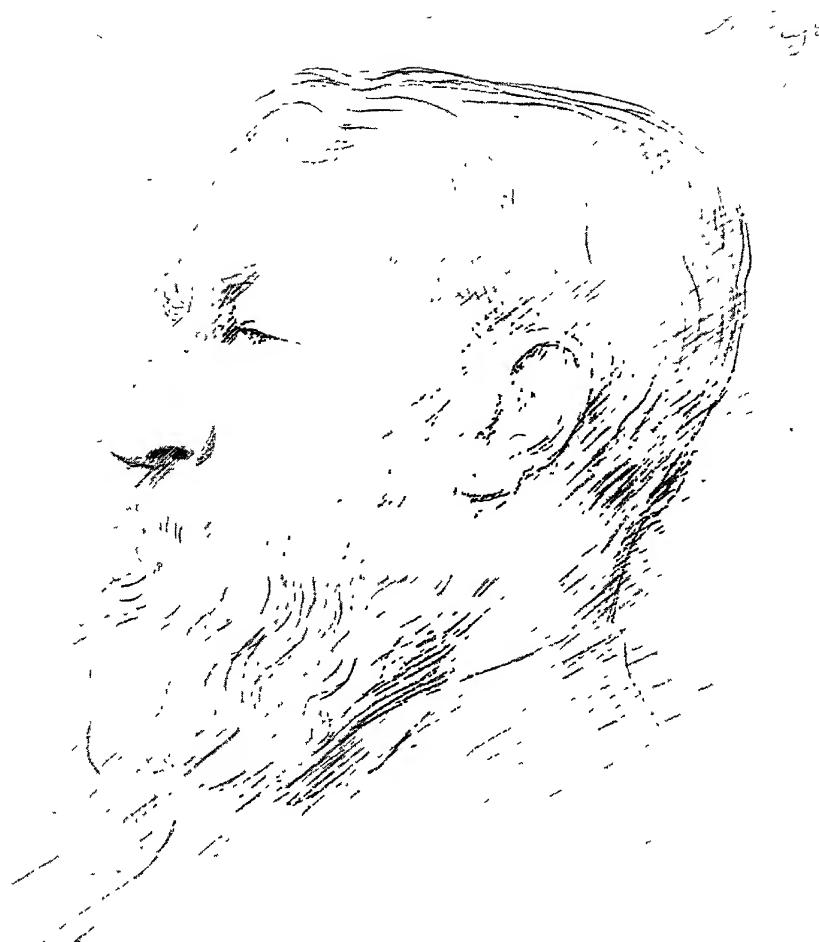
¹ At this date, the elections were spread over a period of two or three weeks,—the boroughs, as a whole, voting before the counties.

on either side. What divided the former from the Conservatives was scarcely more than a party name, and Her Majesty wrote hurriedly to urge an offer of coalition upon her Prime Minister. "She thinks most of the country and of our Foreign Relations and of the *absolute necessity* of having strong and able and safe men to conduct the government of the Empire." "Things must not and cannot return to what they were, for it would be utter ruin to the country and Europe." "There must be a coalition of all moderate and intelligent people, and she appealed to Lord Salisbury's devotion 'to her person and throne' to forward such a consummation" (*December 3, 1885*).¹

A few days before, as soon as the trend of the county elections had become apparent, Lord Randolph had written to him to the same effect. He had pressed for an immediate approach to the moderate Liberals and had offered to facilitate coalition by himself withdrawing,—he was, indeed, he declared, already weary of office. Lord Salisbury repudiated the necessity for such isolated self-effacement : "They hate me as much as they hate you, and if retirements are required for the sake of repose and Whig combinations, I shall claim to retire with you in both respects" (*November 30, 1885*). But he told his colleague and repeated to the Queen that the time for coalitions was not yet :² "Lord Salisbury and his friends will do all in their power to lighten the heavy load which rests upon Your Majesty. But the objections to a coalition will not come from them. Lord Salisbury would have no objection to serve under Lord Hartington ; it is Lord Hartington who would refuse to serve with Lord Salisbury" (*December 4*). And a few days later the Whig leader corroborated this assertion in a speech evidently intended for that purpose. Lord Randolph

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 2nd series, vol. iii. p. 707.

² *Ibid.* p. 708.



THE 8TH DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE
(The Marquis of Hartington)

From a drawing by Legros

had followed up his letter with a memorandum detailing the legislative programme which he should recommend under the circumstances as desirable for promulgation in the Queen's Speech at the opening of the new Parliament.¹

To Lord Randolph Churchill, December 9, 1885.

"After Hartington's speech of Saturday, there can be no longer any question of offering office *just yet* to the Moderate Liberals, and therefore, no question of your or my resigning to facilitate that operation. He evidently said what he did to prevent his friends from suspecting him of any intention, under any circumstances, to join us. His resolves are not eternal, but he has effectually debarred himself from any such course until some little time has passed, or something new has happened. . . .

"In making this Queen's Speech I entirely agree that our leaning must be to the moderate Liberals, and that we can have nothing to do with any advance towards the Home Rulers. The latter course would be contrary to our convictions and our pledges, and would be quite fatal to the cohesion of our party.

"But in leaning towards the moderate Liberals, we should take note of the fact that the moment for bargaining with them has not yet come. Whenever it does come, two results will follow : (1) Our own people will recognise the political necessity of admitting a somewhat stronger ingredient of Liberal policy into our measures, and (2) The moderate Liberals will require some such concession as a condition of their joining us, and as a proof to their own friends that they have not been guilty of any apostacy in so doing. That being so, the extra tinge of Liberalism in our policy will be part of the bargain when it comes, and must not be given away before that time comes. If we are too free with our cash now, we shall have no money to go to market with when the market is open."

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 8.

Then he proceeded to offer “ suggestions in revisal ” of Lord Randolph’s programme, and brought upon himself in return an urgent insistence upon the necessity of tackling the Whigs at once, and a heated denunciation of his acquiescence in “ the old worn-out aristocratic and class garments ” of a bygone generation of Tories.

Yet a comparative study of the two programmes reveals very little difference in principle, though a marked difference in presentation. Lord Randolph places the abolition of intestate primogeniture in the forefront ; Lord Salisbury dismisses it as a change of no importance, not worth the trouble of resisting but which it would be a mistake to volunteer at this stage, since it was “ a bit of a flag ” : “ It might be acceptable as a wedding present to the moderate Liberals whenever the Conservative party leads them to the altar.” But it was its function as a “ flag ” which constituted its whole attraction to the Tory democratic leader.

Among measures for Land Law reform on Lord Randolph’s list appears the “ Enfranchisement of future leaseholds.” Admirable in its object of encouraging occupying ownership, comments the Prime Minister, who had no special love for the leasehold system of land development and was constantly anxious for a wider distribution of ownership. But the result would be more effectually attained, he suggested, by a five years’ exemption for occupying owners from rates and taxes, coupled with the conversion of existing leaseholds through some machinery, worked on a voluntary basis, analogous to that employed in the Irish Land Purchase Act. The policy sketched was certainly not lacking in boldness, but it failed hopelessly in the essential element of a competing offer of championship against the oppressive landlord of Radical philippics.

In the same way, the proposition which aroused the greatest indignation in Lord Salisbury's correspondent was one for deferring Local Government reform in the counties until after it had been dealt with in London, thus giving the squires more time to reconcile themselves to the inevitable change and concentrating attention upon the positive as against the negative advantages of the new machinery. From the point of view of Lord Randolph and his friends, to postpone or obscure their boasted readiness for the deposition of Quarter Sessions was to deprive the policy of half its attraction.

The letters here interchanged were typical of the difference which throughout separated Lord Salisbury from his more "enlightened" advisers. It was concerned at least as much with tactics as with principles and originated in two characteristics which were significant in his leadership. One was his confidence in the convincing quality of his own creed. It was a creed whose central inspiration was the supreme value which he attached to national unity—and perhaps individual liberty—and to the stability dependent on a scrupulous respect for individual rights, and which, in its disdain for privilege and indifference to tradition, was, in fact, quite distinct from the old-world Toryism with which Lord Randolph charged him. Tory Democrats always asserted, and with sincerity, as Lord Randolph did on this occasion, their own loyalty to "great Tory principles." But they never seemed able to believe in the power of those principles to win support, on their own merits, from a working-class electorate. In Lord Salisbury, on the other hand, faith in a widespread national sympathy with his own views never failed, even in times of defeat.

The other characteristic which induced opposition to these counsellors was his abiding sense of the loyalty

due from a party leader to the rank and file of his normal supporters. It was markedly stronger than his sense of the converse obligation. His accession to authority did not destroy his native tolerance of parliamentary indisipline, and he never seriously resented individual or sectional revolts on the back benches. But to disregard the views or even the prejudices of that more or less inarticulate body of Conservatives, which composed the central mass of the voters who had placed him in power, was in his eyes as bad a fault in tactics as in morals. As this attitude was largely responsible for the most marked characteristic of his success in leadership,—the enduring solidity of trust which it evoked,—it may be as well to present it in his own words, written long before he had any expectation of being called upon to test them in practice. On the tactical issue :

“ Every party is constructed on the plan of a comet, with a fixed nucleus, and a floating tail. On ordinary occasions the votes of the nucleus can be counted on securely, and no thought or trouble is necessary to make sure of them. The chief solicitude of those whose duty it is to marshal the troops is for the stragglers—to keep them in the right line of march, and prevent them from becoming deserters. No party was ever free from this difficulty, or could boast of a perfectly well-defined and compact phalanx. Men will follow their standard or their leader with varying fidelity so long as caprice or gregariousness preponderate variously in different minds, but the necessity of incessantly looking after these stragglers is apt to produce a pernicious habit of thought in any leader who is not controlled by hearty political convictions of his own. He comes at last from thinking of them oftener, to think of them as more important than his steady untroublesome followers. He is engaged in working out problems which always depend

on the voting value of a set of variables, and he speedily forgets his constant quantities altogether. But the constant quantities, in spite of their constancy, have beliefs and objects of their own, and after much endurance, some day their patience is tried a little too far, and then they become variables in their turn.” (*Quarterly Review, July 1866.*)

On the ethical aspect the choice of quotations is larger. One must suffice :

“ A party struggle is a campaign fought in the main by volunteers who ask for no pay except the triumph of their cause. The leader, who gathers more substantial spoils, and who—in reputation at least—receives a disproportionate reward, is bound in honour to the scrupulous payment of the solitary recompense demanded by the followers to whom his victory is due. He is bound to it both as a fair return for effective aid and as the fulfilment of an implied pledge. He would never have been their leader if they had not believed him true to their principles. It is a belief which every leader diligently encourages ; they trust him with power precisely because he has encouraged it with success, and induced them to entertain it undoubtingly. . . . He has accepted that position, and the influence which attaches to it, from his party for the purpose of giving effect to their political opinions. If he does not use it for that purpose, but on the contrary employs it in promoting the opinions to which they are opposed, he commits a clear breach of the understanding upon which it was received.” (*Quarterly Review, April 1865.*)

While Conservative leaders were debating as to how Whig secessions might best be promoted, a development was preparing in the opposite camp which was destined to save them all further trouble in the matter. On December 16 an anonymous communiqué—known to contemporaries as the “ Hawarden

Kite"—appeared in one or two newspapers, and produced an effect upon political society which it would require all the well-worn metaphors of explosion to do adequate justice to. The Liberal party for whom, quite as much as for their opponents, the Union between Great Britain and Ireland had hitherto formed a basic element in the Constitution, were to be invited to an immediate acceptance of the Nationalist demand for its repeal. On being appealed to, Mr. Gladstone, while not repudiating, refused to admit responsibility for this announcement—which had, in fact, been issued by his son, Mr. Herbert Gladstone—and steadily maintained this public silence on the subject until his Home Rule Bill was presented to Parliament three months later.

But, in private, negotiations for the furtherance of the new cause became at once active. They were addressed in the first instance to his political opponents. On the 21st he met Mr. Balfour in a country-house and entrusted him with a message to his uncle which he subsequently embodied in a letter. If the Tory Government would undertake to initiate a Home Rule settlement of the Irish question by agreement between the two parties, he would guarantee to give his support to the venture. That this proposal could have been made with any tangible hope of its acceptance was an explanation of it which never occurred to Lord Salisbury. He did not know how far the gossip about Lord Carnarvon had gone, and he never dreamt of the interpretation which Mr. Gladstone, arguing from his own mentality, had placed upon his speech at Newport,—which, indeed,—had he been apprised of it—would probably have made him very angry. The message therefore appeared to him only as a crude attempt to draw a veil of disinterested patriotism over a contemplated surrender to the

Parnellite vote, and he was wholly contemptuous. He confined his reply to a briefly formal refusal to depart from the usage which makes Parliament the place for an announcement of Government policy.

A few days later, Lord Bath, who, as a close friend of Lord Carnarvon's, had probably heard disturbing suggestions, wrote to deprecate any Conservative tampering with the Union : "I am quite of your mind," replied his leader, "and so are the members of the Government generally. I never admired the political transformation scenes of 1829, 1846, 1867 ; and I certainly do not wish to be the chief agent in adding a fourth to the history of the Tory party" (*December 27, 1885*).

He met with no temptation to do violence to these views. Present-day discussions as to what might have been, if a favourable ear had been lent that winter to Mr. Gladstone's advances or Lord Carnarvon's proposals, assume conditions too wholly divorced from the actualities of the time to be of much interest as historical speculations. Lord Carnarvon had brought his proposals before the Cabinet in November, before the elections took place, and again in December after their verdict was known, and had met with a unanimous rejection of them on both occasions. The party's reception of the " Hawarden Kite " was equally whole and uncompromising. From the journalists' point of view, their unmoved solidarity was in uninteresting contrast to the animating deliquescence to which the opposite ranks were reduced by the same publication. Except to a few close or privileged observers, the mental processes by which Mr. Gladstone had arrived at this culminating transformation in the long evolution of his political creed had remained hidden from his followers. This sudden revelation of their results was received with con-

sternation by some and elation by others ; all were bewildered ; many were incredulous. Lord Hartington was among the few who were not wholly surprised, and he lost no time in making his position clear. Before the year ended he announced in a published letter his immovable adherence to the cause of the Union. He was able to quote Mr. Goschen as agreeing with him, and Mr. Forster also declared himself at once to the same effect.¹ But for the most part Liberal leaders waited in silence for some overt declaration on their chief's part, whilst contradictory reports as to the intentions of each one in turn filled the press. Assertions as to Mr. Gladstone's precise purpose were equally inconclusive. Every degree of devolution was prophesied. Agitated Liberal Imperialists clung to the infinite possibilities of his parliamentary genius : he would outwit the Nationalist leader ; he would purchase his support by a measure which in fact would amount to nothing but a gas-and-water Local Government Bill. Mr. Parnell maintained a resolute silence. But it was known that he had been a visitor at Hawarden.

Some sanguine Tories predicted that the formation of a Liberal Ministry would prove impossible ; others looked forward to a more or less prolonged interval of bargaining and playing for position, during which the present Government would continue to hold office. Lord Salisbury did not share in any of these expectations. As he was confident from the first that Mr. Parnell's temper would accept nothing short of a full satisfaction of his demands, so he was convinced that Mr. Gladstone's impatience would tolerate no dilatory tactics in securing a decision as between him and the present Government as soon as the House met.

¹ Mr. Forster took no active part in ensuing events. He was seriously ill this time and died on April 5, 1886.

In this, the wish may in part have been father to the thought. The surrounding tension of excited questionings, and the uncertainty in which their own immediate fate was involved, reacted irritably on Cabinet nerves. In the middle of December a quarrel broke out between Lord Randolph and his Commons' colleagues on the question of parliamentary procedure,—one which scarcely seemed urgent for decision under existing circumstances. He wrote a despairing appeal to his chief for sympathy and support, with a cry to be quit of the whole disappointing business.¹ The Prime Minister replied with soothing reassurances and fatherly counsels on the subject of Cabinet tactics. He should circulate his proposals beforehand and leave time for them to be digested :

“ Seeing the details would make a great difference. Like all bodies of Englishmen, the Cabinet, and especially the holy men,² detest abstract resolutions. Believe me, you cannot be more anxious to be ‘ free ’ than I am. But, to do our duty to those behind us, we must go on in spite of many disagreeables for a few weeks longer.” (*December 16, 1885.*)

At Christmas the Indian Secretary was threatening resignation on this issue, and the Queen wrote indignantly that “ the youngest member of the Cabinet must *not* be allowed to dictate to the others. It will *not* do, and Lord Salisbury must really put his foot down ” (*December 30, 1885.*). A few days later the Prime Minister concluded a letter to Lord Carnarvon, written in discussion of arrangements for the latter’s retirement : “ I am feverishly anxious to be out.

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 26.

² This was a nickname current among Lord Randolph and his friends for a group of the older and more cautious members in the Cabinet. Its allusion, no doubt, was to the name of their most typical representative—Lord Cross.

Internally as well as externally our position as a Government is intolerable" (*January 3, 1886*).

The embarrassing actuality which Lord Carnarvon's tolerated eccentricities of opinion had suddenly achieved may have constituted one element in this discontent. After some hesitation, representative of the pervading uncertainties of the situation, it was decided that he should adhere to his original intention, formally prepared for in the letter in which he had accepted office in the previous June, and send in his resignation before Parliament met, even though it might be expected to precede that of the rest of his colleagues by only a few days. These had no difficulty in deciding unanimously upon a paragraph for the Queen's Speech in uncompromising repudiation of Home Rule. But, unfortunately, that did not exhaust the references to Ireland which the Speech must contain. The loyalist population in the island were clamouring for immediate steps to be taken against the National League, and the Cabinet were agreed as to their early necessity. A declaration to that effect could have no administrative importance, since it was morally certain that the Government would not survive to take action upon it. But Lord Salisbury, in particular, was anxious that, before leaving office, the party should publicly pledge its acceptance of all the responsibilities which a rejection of Home Rule must entail.

Parliament was to meet for business on January 19. At a Cabinet meeting on Saturday the 16th the Prime Minister brought before it the Irish paragraph which he had drawn up. It included the announcement of a measure for the suppression of the National League. The Commons' leader, Sir Michael Hicks Beach, supported by Lord Randolph, objected. Though the supersession of its authority by that of the League

had by now become notorious, the Irish Government had failed to supply the Cabinet with any data for arguing the fact before Parliament. Sir Michael said that, without such official proof, he could not defend such an announcement in debate, and Lord Randolph was equally strong on the score of parliamentary impossibility. Lord Salisbury was urgent on the other side and was supported by the bulk of his colleagues. But the two Commons' leaders were immovable, and intimated that they would rather resign than consent to accept the paragraph as it stood. The discussion was adjourned, and three of the senior Ministers, Lord Cranbrook, Mr. Smith, and Sir Richard Cross, who had taken their chief's side in the argument, wrote to him to urge compromise. A question which was primarily one of tactics was not one upon which it was worth while at that moment to break up the Government. He agreed, though reluctantly, and wrote to Lord Randolph, in response to a warmly affectionate appeal, to suggest an alternative formula—which was the one eventually adopted. It only foreshadowed action, hypothetically, in the event of its proving necessary.

To Lord Randolph Churchill, January 16, 1886.

"I cannot say how much touched I am by the great kindness and loyalty of your letter—I cannot help feeling how little I deserve it. I will tell you at once what my dominant feeling is. It is that we should be a united Cabinet ; if possible with a united party. I have been throughout ready to postpone my individual opinion to this primary consideration. We have no right to the luxury of divided counsels in a crisis such as this. It is evident that the great majority of the Cabinet—and I believe the great majority of the party—wish earnestly for a policy which will show that we do not shrink from the duty of govern-

ment and that we mean to stand by the Loyalists. The disaster I am afraid of is that we should be driven from office on some motion insisting on the necessity of a vigorous step, and our position in Opposition would then be very feeble and we should be much discredited.

“ I really feel very strongly and deeply all the kindness you have shown to me and the great and most successful efforts you have made to sustain the Government. I should differ from you and Beach with the most extreme reluctance. But do not let us take any line which will brand us in the eyes of our countrymen—or will enable our opponents to do so—as the timid party, who let things float because they dare not act. The time is coming on us when people will long for government ; do not let us get a character of shirking responsibility.

“ The question of the personelle of the Government must be considered but the Speech presses for settlement in the first instance. I should have thought that the notorious growth of this second Government throughout Ireland, overshadowing the law and the Queen’s authority, and securing its power by organised terror, would have sustained a case for such a Bill as Gibson produced. If you remain of the opposite opinion, let us consider whether some such phrase as the enclosed could unite us. It is merely a suggestion—I confess I have a heavy heart in the whole matter. I have serious doubts whether I am doing my duty. But my train is going. Perhaps I may write again from Hatfield.”

He had not long to wait for the dreary satisfaction of a moral victory over the dissentients. The demand for “ government,” which he had foreseen, showed itself at once in a revolt on both sides of the House against the hesitating futility of the Speech. Her Majesty was equally condemnatory and he wrote to apologise : “ The present line was only adopted to prevent the secession of the two leading members of

the House of Commons, though what it was that made them take that idea Lord Salisbury is still wholly puzzled to conjecture" (*January 21*,¹ 1886). Their correspondence indicates a fear of offending the susceptibilities of possible Liberal secessionists—though, in fact, the scornful suspicions of the Whigs were as strongly expressed as the indignation of the Tories. On Sunday, the 24th, Lord Salisbury reported again to the Queen with cynical brevity :

"The recalcitrant members of the Cabinet have changed their minds about Coercion under party pressure and a Bill will probably be introduced in two or three days." (*January 24*,² 1886.)

It was almost too late. On January 26 a vote had to be taken upon an agricultural amendment, embodying the demand for "three acres and a cow," and moved by Mr. Jesse Collings. Its appeal was popular and wholly disconnected with the Irish issue on which alone the Opposition were divided. In the presence of this immediate menace the Cabinet came to a hurried conclusion. The same afternoon Sir Michael gave notice that within the next forty-eight hours he would move to suspend all other business of the House for the purpose of immediately passing into law the measure for the suppression of the National League, whose announcement had been excluded from the Queen's Speech. Lord Salisbury wrote to prepare Her Majesty for the now inevitable catastrophe.

To the Queen,³ January 26, 1886.

"With reference to Ireland, Lord Salisbury deeply laments the appearance of vacillation which was im-

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 13.
² *Ibid.* p. 17.

³ *Ibid.* p. 19.

parted to the conduct of the Government by the omission to announce coercive measures in the Royal Speech. To-day he obtained the assent of the Cabinet to repair that grave error, but it is too late to be of any use. Lord Salisbury has very little doubt that the debate on Mr. Collings' motion, which is now going on, will—either to-night or to-morrow—end in a division adverse to the Government, and an adverse division on the address is equivalent to a vote of censure.

“Lord Salisbury doubts whether in any case Mr. Gladstone could have been prevented from ejecting the Government when once he had made up his mind to give the Parnellites what they wanted. But the circumstances have been more unfavourable than they need have been, and to some extent discreditable, owing to the events in the Cabinet of which Your Majesty is aware.”

The death-bed repentance had failed, as he recognised, of the absolution at which it aimed. The Government's gesture was too belated not to be disregarded by the Liberal opponents of Home Rule, and Mr. Gladstone successfully secured the defeat of the Government without his followers having been committed to any premature voting on the burning question. When Lord Salisbury returned to office six months later, it was probably this episode, with a consideration of all the causes of confusion which had led up to it, that decided him to surrender the Foreign Office and try the experiment—destined to be a brief one—of concentrating upon his work as Prime Minister.

But when the momentary annoyance of a tactical failure had passed, there was not much to regret in the event. Under whatever conditions of undignified hustle, the Home Rule challenge had in fact been taken up and his party publicly pledged before leaving

office to the alternative assertion of Imperial authority. And in so far as the blunder in tactics had hastened the catastrophe, it was an undoubted source of satisfaction to himself. The only distress that he appears to have felt on the occasion was in connection with the Queen. He assured her in this same letter that he "had done his utmost to keep the Cabinet in office because of the inconvenience to which, he was painfully aware, a change of Ministers would expose her."

The burst of distress which followed, and was expressed without restraint in one or two of Her Majesty's letters, was largely an indirect outcome of her long training in constitutionalism. To a degree remarkable in a person of her mental activity, she had accommodated herself to a convention which forbids the Sovereign to have opinions on home politics. The result had been to destroy her interest in them and to concentrate it almost wholly upon questions of external and national policy. Thus the personal aspect of the present crisis, as it reacted on these, obscured all others in her eyes. Though matters were in a favourable course in most of the foreign questions at issue, in none of them had a final settlement been reached. The achievement of her present Minister had been patent. In seven months he had raised England from a position of impotent isolation to one of acknowledged leadership in Europe. To see him removed to make room for the very men whose failure he had been at such brilliant pains to repair was intolerable in her eyes. She was not prepared for it by any certain expectation. The reports of Liberal revolt, which had followed the publication of the "kite," had revived and made confident in her those hopes of a coalition which Lord Salisbury had tried to discourage immediately after the elections. She responded now to his telegraphed

message of resignation with an almost incoherent outpouring of protest and dismay:—he would easily believe what a blow and shock it was to her;—who could at this time conduct the difficult foreign questions but himself;—the Commons' leaders had been greatly to blame;—the Liberals were too divided to form a Cabinet;—she would never in any case consent to a return of the Gladstone-Granville régime;—she suggested a dissolution. Meanwhile she privately consulted Mr. Goschen—who, through his difference with the Liberals over the County Franchise question, already occupied a central position between the parties—as to the possibilities of a coalition. He told her, as the Tory leader had done, that the time was not yet. Lord Salisbury went down to Osborne and presumably suggested mitigating possibilities. A letter followed him on his return to London, announcing that she had sent Sir Henry Ponsonby to summon Mr. Gladstone to her presence on the preliminary understanding that Lord Rosebery should be appointed as Foreign Secretary and that the policy of his immediate predecessor should not be changed—conditions which the incoming Minister made no difficulty in accepting. In this letter she expressed her regrets in a more ordered fashion than hitherto :

“ Though the Queen will see Lord Salisbury again and trusts that a very short time (if any) will elapse before she sees him again in office, she wishes to say how great her admiration has been of the admirable manner in which he has conducted public affairs and of his triumphant success in his conduct of foreign affairs, where he has in seven months raised Great Britain again to the position which she ought to hold in the world.

“ Personally it has been a pleasure and a comfort to the Queen to transact business with him, and

she felt the blessing of having a Prime Minister in whom she could *thoroughly* confide, and whose opinion was always given in so kind and wise a manner.” (January 29, 1886.)

Lord Salisbury returned his “earnest and grateful” thanks for the language of this letter, and was reassuring as to the improbability of the foreign policy of the country suffering “any great damage” under the conditions now guaranteed. The next day he wrote commenting upon a letter which Mr. Goschen had written for her consolation.

“If Lord Hartington remains firm and does not join Mr. Gladstone, a coalition is certain to take place before long, though it is not possible at this moment. Lord Salisbury shares Mr. Goschen’s hope and belief that (if Lord H. does not join) the forces outside Mr. Gladstone will be strong enough to prevent any lasting mischief from being done, and it may be hoped that, by the time his tenure of power ends . . . the agricultural labourer will have found out the hollowness of Radical promises and will range himself with the rest of the rural community. He therefore sincerely joins in hoping that Your Majesty will not be disheartened.” (January 31,¹ 1886.)

The Queen, in a tactfully tentative fashion, suggested a step in the peerage. She would like him to receive some public farewell mark of her regard: “but he has all that she can give—unless she might offer him a dukedom?” Permission was begged to decline the honour:

“The kind words in which Your Majesty has expressed approval of his conduct are very far more precious to him than any sort of title.”

And so, to the appealing simplicity of her good-

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 84.

bye on the day that he gave up the seals and official communication ceased between them :

“ The Queen does not trust herself to dwell on parting with Lord Salisbury. It would quite upset her—for the loss to her is so great and she is *so* alone.” (*February 5, 1886.*)

CHAPTER X

THE HOME RULE BATTLE LORD SALISBURY'S SECOND MINISTRY, 1886

THE seals were exchanged on February 6. By that time one initial uncertainty had been eliminated by Lord Hartington's refusal to join the Government,—a refusal in which he was followed by the majority of the Whig leaders, though three of the most distinguished among these—Mr. Goschen, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Forster—had, in fact, already separated themselves from Mr. Gladstone on earlier issues.¹ Mr. Chamberlain did not refuse office. It was nevertheless reported that he was resolved against any tampering with the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, though, as Mr. Gladstone's measure was not yet drafted, he was willing to give it the benefit of the doubt.

The Conservative Opposition started at once upon their campaign against Home Rule in any form. Lord Salisbury, speaking at Hertford on the 17th of the month, prophesied that Mr. Gladstone would give the oyster to his new Parnellite allies and the shells, “properly decorated and illuminated,” to his old friends. The scheme would bristle with securities—which would be as valuable as other paper barricades :

¹ Mr. Goschen's opposition to household suffrage in the counties had made it impossible for him to join Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet in 1880; Mr. Forster had resigned from it over the Kilmainham Treaty in the spring of 1882, and Mr. Bright over the bombardment of Alexandria the following summer.

no limitations could endure where the means for enforcing them had been abandoned. He devoted a few sentences to the dangers which might ensue in the event of war or the menace of war, but in this, his first public speech upon the controversy, as in his *Quarterly* article of three years before, and in his private reply to Lord Carnarvon's suggestion, he reasserted, as his most vital objection to the change, the betrayal of Irishmen who had been loyal to England which it must entail. "The dishonour involved is a far more serious consideration than any thought of Imperial danger and loss." He added, with a touch of scorn, that if the avoidance of moral disgrace made no appeal, it was worth remembering that disloyalty could never be materially costless to a world-wide Empire "which is maintained by the faith which men have that those who take your side will be supported and upheld."

He made one more speech, in South London, and then went abroad to the Riviera to snatch a holiday during the interval of waiting for the Bill's production. But before going he transacted one piece of necessary business. Except for his share in the Queen's confidential enquiries of Mr. Goschen, he had as yet had no communication with the leaders of the Liberal revolt. The hot partisan fighting of the last five years, culminating in the bitter recriminations of election time, had not made the path of co-operation easy. The revolters prided themselves upon being the champions of Liberal orthodoxy against the Home Rule heresy of their leader and they emphasised this claim by maintaining a continuous criticism of past Tory delinquencies which aroused a responsive, and at times outspoken, irritation on the Conservative back benches. A definite understanding at the centre was becoming essential if the defenders of the Union

were to pull their full weight. Lord Salisbury knew Lord Hartington to speak to, and that was all. The Whig chief was a sportsman whose leisure was mostly spent in the hunting-field, at his Club, or on the race-course. In the difference of their personal tastes and interests, as much as in their hitherto unbroken political antagonism, their lives had touched one another as little as was possible in two Englishmen belonging to the same class and owning the same social traditions. But the directness of temper, which was their common possession, provided a foundation for their alliance whose solidity, as the event proved, required no buttressing from common habits or cultural sympathy.

On the evening before Lord Salisbury left England, Lord Hartington called to see him at Arlington Street. The visit is referred to in a letter from the former to Mr. Goschen, in replying to one protesting against some provocative Tory language in the House of Commons. The Tory chief retorted by complaining of an attack upon the late Government which had just been delivered by Sir Henry James, one of the Liberal Unionist leaders, in language which even suggested a tentative of re-approach to Mr. Gladstone.

“ I was so much puzzled by James’s speech that I asked Hartington to let me have a talk with him and he very kindly came here. The upshot of an hour’s talk was, I think, this—that there seems to be no obstacle to our acting together to resist Home Rule—but any further co-operation is not within the field of practical politics at present.” (*March 4, 1886.*)

According to a report of this interview which the writer of this letter made to his family the same evening, he was not alone in seeking reassurance. There were many rumours at the time, industriously circulated

and generally credited among Gladstonians, of a Tory intention of repeating the manœuvre of '67 by "dishing the Whigs" over Home Rule. Perhaps a recollection of the part which the present Tory leader had played on the earlier occasion helped the ease with which his visitor's doubts on the point appear to have been set at rest : "He asked me whether I could assure him that the Conservative party would resist Home Rule to the end. I told him" (and there was a reminiscent surliness of tone as he repeated the words) "'Certainly ;—of course !'—and that was all." But it was sufficient. In the future there were differences of temperament to be accommodated between the two men in working together ; but it is safe to say that, from the time of this first meeting, no shadow of uneasiness ever visited either of them as to the other's constancy or sincerity of purpose.

A month was spent at Monte Carlo, where, to the delight of his family and friends, Lord Salisbury was safeguarded from the temptations peculiar to the place by being refused admittance to the Casino on account of his unconventional style of dress. It was during this visit that the charm of the coast and the discomforts of hotel life combined to determine Lord and Lady Salisbury to provide themselves with a permanent home of their own there. Lord Rowton, who was also stopping at Monte Carlo, helped in prospecting for a satisfactory site, and found one for them on the mountain-side above Beaulieu—at that time a small village boasting only a single hotel, one street, and two or three villas. The purchase of the land was concluded that year, though it was not until four or five years later that a house was built upon it and became ready for occupation.

Echoes from the hubbub which he had left behind him reached Lord Salisbury daily through the post.

Colleagues and supporters were not a little scandalised at his absence while “the greatest parliamentary battle since that of 1832” was in preparation. But he refused to be moved from his quiescent expectancy. No tactical decisions could be taken till the scheme was revealed. “I shall come back,” he wrote to Lord Cranbrook, “as soon as he (Mr. Gladstone) graciously allows us to do business—but not till then” (*March 22, 1886*). Excitement among the gossips rose higher with Mr. Chamberlain’s resignation, which was sent in on March 15. It was not accepted or publicly announced until a fortnight later, but during the interval he talked freely with Tory acquaintance in the House of Commons. Mr. Balfour sent a detailed summary of one such conversation to his uncle, quoting among other things an indignant complaint of the Radical leader as to the weakness of government in England : her executive was too much at the mercy of the elected body. Lord Salisbury was amused.

To Mr. Balfour, March 29, 1886.

“Many thanks for your very interesting précis of the conversation with Chamberlain. I quite agree with you that, as long as you *can* work with them, they are much more satisfactory allies than the Whigs. I am glad to see Chamberlain coming to the idea that a representative body interfering with every detail of executive Government is incompatible with strong government. But before you have a strong democratic Government, freed from this thorn in the flesh, you must follow the example of the U.S. and have ‘fundamental laws,’ which could only be altered by special machinery. With us, the feebleness of our government is our security—the only one we have,—against revolutionary alterations of our laws.”

Everyone prophesied ; no one knew ; and the

prophecies varied in direction with every post. Mr. Chamberlain had taken his leap with no certainty of support and warned his new allies of probable defeat. Lord Randolph, who took a more sanguine view, wrote several letters to his chief—discussing the alternatives to be considered in the event of the Bill's rejection. He and others dreaded an immediate dissolution—it would be too soon after the late elections to make a conversion of votes possible. Lord Salisbury disagreed. A dissolution directly upon the Home Rule issue, and while the domestic quarrel was still vigorous in the Liberal ranks, was the thing to hope for, though he was sceptical as to the probability of any great movement being aroused in the country on the subject :

“ I doubt any popular stirring on this question. The instinctive feeling of an Englishman is to get rid of an Irishman. We may gain as many votes as Parnell takes from us. I doubt more. Where we shall gain is in splitting up our opponents.” (*March 31.*)

He returned to England on April 3—five days before the introduction of the Bill,—and was at once plunged into the consultations for which his colleagues had been clamouring.

“ I have seen our people to-day,” he reported to his wife on the 4th. “ It seems to be pretty certain that the Bill will not pass the H. of C. Iddesleigh, Beach, and Randolph all agree in wishing for a pure Whig Government, supported by us. They all shy the idea of a dissolution—but I believe that is the money. I am afraid of the pure Whig experiment—we should quarrel. A Gladstonian dissolution on Home Rule will be best.” (*April 4, 1886.*)

His aversion from the pure Whig experiment did not extend to present collaboration with the Whig

leader. He saw him the next morning at Devonshire House, and thenceforward communication between them was constant throughout the session. Even when some question as to debating tactics in the House of Commons was at issue, Lord Hartington continued to approach his allies through the intermediary of their chief in the Lords instead of directly in the lobbies of his own House. It was perhaps fortunate that the embryo coalition was thus kept detached in its central direction from the petty agitations and personal intrigues which haunt the lobbies of the House of Commons during periods of party upheaval.

In standards of conduct and singleness of aim, sympathy between the two leaders was complete ; in political opinion there was little, if any, difference discoverable between them ; but the peculiar characteristics, which had for so long given life to the artificial unity of the Liberal party, still survived and were responsible for many a private grumble in Arlington Street against the "*Whig mentality.*" To keep their group a separate entity ; to leave a door still open for eventual reconciliation with the main body, from which it had been severed ; above all, to preserve their right to the sacred name of Liberal, with all the emotions and traditions which it embodied, was still a dominant anxiety among the Whig leaders. It expressed itself in their tactical policy. Lord Salisbury urged that the collaboration between the allies should from the first be publicly advertised. Mr. Goschen agreed with him, and under his influence his colleagues, greatly daring, consented to appear on the same platform with the Tory leaders at a meeting in the Covent Garden Opera House, called on April 14 to inaugurate the campaign against the just-presented Bill. The meeting itself proved an unqualified success

of unanimity and enthusiasm, and aroused much excitement among sympathisers in the press and in London. But some of their constituents remonstrated with the Liberal leaders who took part in it. They saw their reputations as Liberals endangered, and it was decided that the experiment must not be repeated and all community of platforms eschewed for the future.

Mr. Goschen, himself disappointed, wrote to excuse and explain the decision come to. "It is not," he said, "that there is hostility to the Conservatives exactly,—but the fear of appearing to be friendly to them." Lord Salisbury replied, rather grimly : "I will not say that I can understand the feeling of which you speak—but I recognise its existence. In fact, I read your letter in Hartington's face last Wednesday" (*April 21*). To a Tory friend in the provinces, who had written to lament the consequences of this decision in his own locality, he described the position : "Their view seems to be that, in allying themselves with us, they are contracting a mésalliance ; and though they are very affectionate in private, they don't like shewing us to their friends till they have had time to prepare them for the shock" (*April 22*). The metaphor pleased him, and he used often to indemnify himself for any annoyance felt by demure elaborations of it in his letters and conversation.

Unfortunately, he was in his own person peculiarly out of sympathy with the sentiment which, whether directly or in their recognition of its presence among their followers, was so prominent in the Liberal Unionist leaders. During that session many stories were current in London society as to the pain which the breach with their party caused to individuals among them ; of middle-aged men whose eyes filled with tears as they spoke of it ; of confessions that all

savour was gone for them from public life ; of expressions of passionate anger, which even in Tory eyes seemed exaggerated, against the chief who, because of his own change of opinion and not theirs, had thus driven them into the wilderness. When such stories were repeated to Lord Salisbury, he would merely shrug his shoulders in incomprehension. He was appealed to to put himself in the place of his new friends ;—if the position had been reversed would he not have felt the same as towards his own party ? “Certainly not !” he replied promptly. He might suffer, he said, in the incidental breaking of individual friendships, but, for the rest, if his party were to abandon the principles for which he gave it his support, “I should walk for the last time down the steps of the Carlton Club, without casting a glance or a regret behind me.”

This self-presentation was undoubtedly accurate. It was, indeed, his entire lack of party sentiment which made him such an uncompromising party fighter. He fought always for a cause, never for a flag, or a tradition, or a name. Therefore the ethics which governed his conduct were those of war, not those of the cricket field. Sportsmanlike amenities, proper to a struggle for prize or pre-eminence, were out of place in a battle. Every advantage against his opponents that chance or circumstance offered must be pressed home ; no means for victory that honour allowed must be neglected ; in its inspiration, in fact, his partisanship was scarcely distinguishable from his patriotism. He felt strongly the claim of personal loyalty to comrades in the fight ; but the party as a corporate entity he saw only as a necessary piece of mechanism, and of mechanism largely associated with the more petty and sordid sides of public life. From such a standpoint it was useless to attempt sympathy with the sorrows

of his Liberal Unionist friends,—the best that he could achieve was silent tolerance of an unintelligible emotion.

Their regrets did not impair their activity. By agreement, the foremost place in the struggle, both in the House and in the country, was conceded to be theirs until the critical division should be over. But their allies were not altogether silent, and one of Lord Salisbury's speeches—delivered at St. James's Hall on May 15—requires mention for two passages in it which became notorious through the use which his opponents made of them. They were of very different importance. One supplied an instructive example of the dangers of rhetorical illustration. He was disputing the contention that we ought to show confidence in the Irish people by giving them independent representative government. The claim of any population to this precise expression of confidence depended upon their characteristics : “ You would not confide free representative institutions to the Hottentots, for instance.” Then going on, as he said, up the scale, he quoted the populations of India,—“ although finer specimens of human character you will hardly find than some among them,”—Russians, Greeks,—as people for whom such institutions were unsuitable, closing with a more generally exclusive statement : “ When you come to narrow it down you will find that this,—which is called self-government but is really government by the majority,—works admirably when it is confided to people who are of Teutonic race, but that it does not work so well when people of other races are called upon to join in it.” The Irish would be naturally included and were probably intended to be included in this final negative, in dignified companionship with the Latin peoples. But the fatally vigorous suggestion conveyed in the opening sentence

was ineffaceable, and for the next half-dozen years it would be safe to say that there was not one Liberal meeting in ten at which some speaker did not repeat the assertion, that Lord Salisbury had declared Irishmen to be on a level with Hottentots.

The other instance was of more solid importance, and its quotation by his opponents was more subtly misapplied. Early in the speech he had spoken of his attitude towards Coercion, and had repudiated, as he had often done before, any policy of restraint upon ordered freedom, while insisting upon the duty of enforcing laws against crime, even when it was adventitiously associated with politics by the "peculiar methods of propaganda" in the form of murder, outrage, and boycotting, in which Irishmen indulged. The incriminated phrase was quite detached from this passage, appearing at the close of his argument in reply to the repeated and culminating contention of his adversaries, that the opponents of Home Rule had no alternative to offer.

" My alternative policy is that Parliament should enable the Government of England to govern Ireland. Apply that receipt honestly, consistently, and resolutely for twenty years and at the end of that time you will find that Ireland will be fit to accept any gifts in the way of local government or repeal of coercion laws that you may wish to give her. What she wants is government,—government that does not flinch, that does not vary; government that she cannot hope to beat down by agitations at Westminster; government that does not alter in its resolutions or its temperature by the party changes which take place at Westminster."

Epitomised sarcastically as "twenty years' resolute government," or frankly paraphrased as twenty years of Coercion, this recommendation figured in innumer-

able political perorations as embodying the quintessence of Tory tyranny and ineptitude. Partisan critics, resolved on incomprehension, missed a charge to which the speaker was fairly open. The witness of history and of the experience of other countries with populations at the outset as mutually antagonistic could be called to justify the belief that there was no impossibility in the nature of things in achieving contentment for Ireland under a steady course of government by England. But hopes which depended for their fulfilment upon the chance of twenty years' continuous purpose at Westminster must be charged with delusive optimism, and could hardly have inspired a genuinely satisfying confidence in the author of "Disintegration."

There is no need to dwell upon the history of the great House of Commons' battle over the Home Rule Bill of 1886. Its interest as a battle hinged upon the fact, which became more apparent as the solidifying of individual opinion enabled heads to be counted, that the result would depend upon the still indeterminate number whom Mr. Chamberlain could induce to vote with him. The debate on the second reading of the Bill was prolonged by repeated adjournment over the portentous period of six weeks, while the great parliamentarian in charge of it strove by successive changes of front to secure the needful support from among this doubtful element. He failed, but was so near success that a week before the date of the division Mr. Chamberlain proposed to his allies to let the decision go by default by leaving the House in a body when the division was called. Mr. Gladstone, as a last resort, had engaged to accept the vote as a declaration of principle only, binding no one as to the Bill's provisions, and had promised to withdraw it imme-

diately after the vote was taken. Mr. Chamberlain suggested that the Opposition might fairly refuse to take part in such a farcical waste of public time and might thus escape the risk of defeat. Lord Hartington reported the suggestion without comment to Lord Salisbury, who replied that, having consulted with his friends, he had found them unanimous with himself in rejecting it.

This display of hesitation at the last moment, by a man whose grit and will for victory were unquestionable, was typical of the strain under which all nerves were suffering from the prolonged uncertainty of the conflict. The strain broke on that night of June 8—or rather, in the small hours of the next morning—at the moment when the Unionist tellers appeared on the right of the row facing the Speaker, and the victors springing to their feet, mounting on the benches, waving hats and order-papers, broke into a roar of cheers which rose and fell through long minutes of uncontrollable liberation. There was no question as to the spontaneity of the outburst any more than of that of the answering shout of triumph which came from the crowd of Ulstermen who were awaiting the verdict outside, and who gave final expression to their relief by seizing upon Lord Hartington as he issued from the Chamber and carrying him shoulder high round the Central Lobby. In their case, their own future destinies were at stake, but it is interesting to note, as bearing upon mass psychology, that neither the English nor the Scottish members, whose enthusiasm made the scene memorable, nor any of their constituents, had the slightest personal or direct interest in the result.

Lord Salisbury was at Hatfield, where the news reached him in a telegram¹ for which one of his sons

¹ This was before the days of public telephoning.

waited at the post office, disturbing the slumbers of the little town with his cheers as he ran up the hill with it at three in the morning. That Lord Salisbury, disdainful as he habitually was of unnecessary emotion, should have waited up to that hour for a result which he could have read five hours later in the morning papers was, perhaps, within its degree, as striking a witness as any other to the state of feeling which prevailed.

An immediate dissolution was announced, and for the Conservative leader the next three weeks were strenuous with electioneering labours of a specialised kind. At an early stage he had pledged his word that, so far as his influence and that of his central organisation could prevail, no man who voted against the Bill should be opposed by a Conservative at the ensuing elections. It was not an easy pledge to implement. It was only seven months since the men who were thus to be safeguarded had, each in his own constituency, embodied "the enemy" to its uncompromising provincial Tories : since his success had been contested with all the energy that they owned ; and since—especially where he was a follower of Mr. Chamberlain—he had been identified with attacks upon the principles and institutions which they most cherished. And the bitterest drop in the cup was that, since the Gladstonians had sworn to fight the seat of every seceder, regardless of consequences, it was in many instances certain victory in a three-cornered contest that the Conservative candidate was called upon to renounce, and that, perhaps, in the only seat through which he had a chance of entering Parliament or one for which he had been fighting unavailingly for years. That, under such circumstances, out of ninety-three Liberals who voted against the Bill there were only six who were either opposed by Conservatives or

forced to retire in their favour, witnessed to a substantial achievement in patriotic self-suppression.

Mr. Douglas and Captain Middleton worked hard for this result, and their chief assisted by appeals in his public speeches and through a copious private correspondence when difficulties arose. He protested, indeed, in a letter to Mr. Goschen, that it was impossible for him to act as a "Court of Appeal in individual cases." But in the same letter he mentions that he is "pressing as hard as he can upon M.,"—has failed with W.,—"is doing all he possibly can in the S. case,"—and "fears that T. is in a state of open rebellion." As other letters show him to have been intervening, directly or indirectly,—though always in language of scrupulous respect for local independence—in at least three other constituencies, the "impossibility" evidently admitted of qualification. His task was not complete even when a clear field had been secured for the Liberal Unionist: there are a number of letters urging provincial leaders to back such candidates with "a support as cordial and united as if he were a Conservative."

He stayed to see this work through, and on July 1, when the elections opened, started for Royât in the Auvergne. He expected victory, but hoped that Mr. Gladstone would meet Parliament and thus give him time for a "cure" which his doctors had ordered. But on the 21st a telegram from Osborne informed him that the Liberal chief had resigned and summoned him to return to England as quickly as possible. The covering letter met him in London.

From the Queen,¹ July 22, 1886.

"The Queen is grieved to have to recall Lord Salisbury so hurriedly from Royât, but she had no

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 164.

alternative and she hopes that his cure will only have been shortened by two or three days.

“The Queen, having accepted Mr. Gladstone’s resignation as soon as he tendered it on Tuesday, and Lord Salisbury having by far the largest majority, she at once appeals to him to undertake to form a Government, and *as strong a one as he possibly can* form to prevent the recurrence of frequent changes which are so bad for the country, not to speak of the serious inconvenience and anxiety they are to the Queen. Lord Salisbury knows *what confidence* she reposes in him.

“It seems to her to be a time when every nerve should be strained, every personal and party feeling should be set aside for the public good, and it would be a *great thing* and what the country *earnestly wishes* for and *expects*, if he could secure the assistance of some of the Liberal Unionists.”

The elections had testified to a greater “popular stirring” than he had anticipated. The Home Rule Bill had been defeated in the dissolved House by a majority of 30; the majority returned against it in the new House was 118. Some 20 of the Liberal Unionists had lost their seats, but the Conservatives had increased their numbers by 70, and were 40 more than the Gladstonians and the Parnellites combined. But they were still 20 short of a majority of the whole House, and Lord Hartington’s and Mr. Chamberlain’s followers held the balance. The Conservative gains were mainly in the southern counties and the large towns,—London leading the way with a majority for the Union of nearly 6 to 1:—51 for, and 9 against.

To Lord Cranbrook, July 10, 1886.—Royât.

“Many thanks for your very kind letter of congratulations. As far as the Conservatives are concerned

I think the polls have been very satisfactory. I am sorry so many of the Unionists have lost their seats. It is a good deal their own fault,—for they have so systematically snubbed us that I have no doubt our people voted rather languidly. They had much better, as we wished, have come on our platforms and let us come on theirs.

“ Scotland has come out worse than we expected. When you and I were first in the House of Commons how little we should have expected that you would ever be able to write, ‘ London is really the base of Tory principles.’ ”

To Lord Bath, July 10, 1886.—Royât.

“ I am very sorry for the Unionist reverses, but in some instances it has been their own fault. If they had spoken out like Chamberlain and J. Collings—still more if they had deigned to let us appear on their platforms, our people would have supported them more strenuously. But they would imagine they could convert the Gladstonites.”

As soon as the verdict of the constituencies became clear, letters flowed out to Royât conveying the views of colleagues and followers as to what they expected of their chief in the opportunity about to be offered to him. While prepared for coalition, there was practical unanimity against the nomination of a Whig Prime Minister. Sir Michael Beach wrote almost pathetically to express the hope that nothing that had passed would make Lord Salisbury feel bound, at all events, “ to initiate an arrangement in which I am sure no one who has served under you would acquiesce without something more than pain.” But Lord Salisbury did not agree. He arrived in London on Friday the 23rd and saw Sir Michael the same evening. The next morning, before going on to Osborne, he went across to Devonshire House and pressed Lord Hartington to

accept the Premiership. He reported the result the same evening.

To Sir Michael Hicks Beach, July 24, 1886.—Osborne.

“ I went to Hartington this morning and laid before him as clearly as I could the reasons which induced us to think that the new Ministry should be formed by him and not by me. I frankly explained to him all the difficulties which stood in our path and which we discussed last night. He combated my arguments in his usual sleepy manner, but he evidently had made up his mind, for he ended in pulling out a MS. and reading out a considerable extract setting out his reasons for refusing. I declined to take any immediate negative and remained arguing with him till I was forced to catch the train. It was then agreed that he should see his friends to-day and send their formal reply to-night. I hinted that the Queen might wish to receive the refusal and the reasons for it from his own lips, but he strongly deprecated any such summons, and indeed, the terms of his written reply leave no room for it. I have just received that reply. I will send it to you to-morrow—I am keeping it to copy for the Queen now. The gist of it is that he means to keep the Unionist Liberals together ; that if he joined us, Chamberlain would be left with so small a following that he would have no choice but to slide back into Gladstonianism. His other great objection was that, on account of the relative numbers, any Government he might form would have to rely upon the Conservatives so completely that the electors would never be persuaded that he had not become a Conservative, and he was doubtful whether either he or Henry James would be re-elected.

“ The terms of the letter are so decisive as to leave no room for negotiation.

“ I told Randolph this morning that I had pressed you to go to Ireland.”

The few hours spent in London had been fully

employed. Not only had the alternative of Prime Ministers been settled, but also the most important feature of the new Cabinet. Sir Michael had definitely refused to continue in the Commons leadership and that Friday evening the two colleagues had arranged that, failing Lord Hartington's acceptance, it should be offered to Lord Randolph Churchill,—a challenging though inevitable nomination.

From Osborne the only letter which Lord Salisbury seems to have written on the subject of his new Cabinet was one explaining to its recipient his inability to include him in it. It was to Lord Carnarvon. The precedence which he gave to it, the language used in it,—indeed, the fact that he should have thought any explanation necessary under actual circumstances —witnessed to relations that must be taken into account in interpreting some of the mistakes of his previous Ministry.

To Lord Carnarvon, July 25, 1886.

“ I have tried hard to induce Hartington to take the Prime Minister's place. He has definitely refused and I have therefore kissed hands to-day. I think I ought to write to you before I write to anyone else to explain the peculiar position I am in. I am representing, more than anything else, the mandate of the country to resist Home Rule. The country does not understand nuances, and the new Government will have to do its best to maintain the law, while refusing any satisfaction to ‘national aspirations.’ We can give to Ireland *no* separate existence, beyond what we give to England and Scotland.

“ I have no difficulty in undertaking this task, whether its promise of success is poor or ample, for it is in accordance with the convictions I have all along entertained. I am equally conscious that it is inconsistent with those which you have expressed, not only in private but publicly. It would be impossible

for you to join, while this particular crisis lasts, without exposing either yourself or the other members of the Government to the suspicion that, either on one side or the other, convictions on this vital question were being tampered with.

"I have stated my own views briefly and plainly as I was bound to do, but I am well aware that the objection would be even stronger from your side to joining our councils with the programme I have mentioned.

"I am very sorry for our temporary separation, but the point on which we differ has become the paramount question of the day, in which all others are absorbed. I do not know what the issue will be. Heaven defend the right!"

He had decided to relinquish the Foreign Office. In search of a substitute he turned first to Lord Lyons, as to a man of proved wisdom, of unrivalled intimacy with European politics, and of whose capacity for working with and under himself he had had full experience. Sir Philip Currie was sent over to Paris to try and induce acceptance. But the old ambassador declined to embark on such a revolutionary change of status, and Lord Cranbrook reluctantly refused a similar invitation on account of his ignorance of French. Lord Iddesleigh was finally chosen. Sir Michael Hicks Beach took the post of most immediate executive importance as Chief Secretary for Ireland, and the composition of the rest of the Cabinet was completed without incident.¹

¹ The Cabinet of 1886 was as follows :

<i>First Lord of the Treasury</i> , Lord Salisbury.	<i>War Office</i> , Mr. W. H. Smith.
<i>Foreign Office</i> , Lord Iddesleigh.	<i>India Office</i> , Lord Cross.
<i>Exchequer</i> , Lord Randolph Churchill.	<i>Colonial Office</i> , Mr. E. Stanhope.
<i>Chief Secretary</i> , Sir Michael Beach.	<i>Admiralty</i> , Lord G. Hamilton.
<i>Lord Chancellor</i> , Lord Halsbury.	<i>Duchy of Lancaster</i> , Lord John Manners.
<i>President of the Council</i> , Lord Cranbrook.	<i>Board of Trade</i> , Lord Stanley.
<i>Home Office</i> , Mr. Henry Matthews.	<i>Irish Chancellor</i> , Lord Ashbourne.

A combined meeting of the Whig and Radical Unionist parties was called at Devonshire House to speed the new Ministry on its way. Lord Hartington and Mr. Chamberlain announced their intention of giving it a general support. Mr. Chamberlain's speech was rather aggressively detached. But he proved better than his word and no difficulties arose in the subsequent working of the alliance, though for this first year he avowedly rode loose to it, and his relations with Ministers were limited to a personal intimacy with Lord Randolph. Lord Hartington maintained with the Prime Minister a continuous and responsible intercourse whose surface was never ruffled unless by an occasional nervousness on his part lest the Government should not prove sufficiently Conservative.

Certain necessary financial business had been cut short by the dissolution and Parliament met in the middle of August for a fragmentary session. Lady Salisbury went over to Puys, her husband's hopes of following her being continually postponed by the onslaught of obstruction with which the Irish members inaugurated the new régime. His son Robert, who had just taken his degree at Oxford, was his companion at Hatfield. He reported to his mother a conversation which was illuminating as to Lord Salisbury's attitude towards his present post,—the necessary deductions being made for the careless exaggerations of intimate talk.

"I went for a walk to-day with my father and he dilated on his powerlessness to control foreign policy. He said, 'People make a distinction between principles and details, but the distinction is only valuable as an intellectual assistance. In practice, everything is done by the arrangement and execution of the details. The Prime Minister may lay down the broad principles of foreign policy, but those principles can only be carried

out by the judicious execution of a number of details, and if the Prime Minister attempts to interfere in these latter, the only result is confusion. And the same is true with respect to all the executive,—though not the legislative,—part of the Government. Gladstone is a good instance of the power of the Prime Minister in legislation, but he has never achieved anything whatever in the executive part of his administrations.' 'Then,' said I, 'you regard your office as a kind of fifth wheel of the coach ?' 'Yes, as far as the executive is concerned. It is an office of infinite worry but very little power.' "

At the close of the letter the writer summarises his report, irreverently but reassuringly, for his mother's benefit : " Altogether he is rather rampageous, hates his office, but is in very good health." (*August 25, 1886.*)

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CHAPTER XI

1886

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL

"LORD RANDOLPH is rather nervous of the promotion proposed for him," Lord Salisbury reported to the Queen on the Monday of his return from Osborne. It was a nervousness shared by many onlookers when the appointment was published. The new Chancellor of the Exchequer and Leader of the House of Commons was only thirty-six years old, the youngest man in the Cabinet, with an official experience limited to the seven months' Ministry of the previous year. Besides this, the audacity of his controversial methods and his tendency to borrow the language, if not the substance, of Radical appeal, had made him suspect to the more sober elements in the party. But his pre-eminence, both in the House and on the platform, was so indisputable that no serious protest was made against the nomination. The colleagues over whose heads he was promoted made no demur. It has been noted by other observers how far personal jealousies were at a discount in the political atmosphere of those days, and the very recklessness of Lord Randolph's temper was peculiarly unprovocative of them. There were one or two men who had particularly resented his "fourth party" impertinences in the past whose feelings were consulted by a transference from the close propinquity

of his front bench to the House of Lords. For the rest, most of his colleagues credited him with such an authority over the electorate and intimacy with its mentality as to inspire them with an almost superstitious reverence. Consciously preparing themselves for the concessions which they felt to be inevitable for a Government in a minority, they looked upon him—even those who were least in sympathy with him—as an oracle whose pronouncements it would be perilous to disregard. More than one of these grave counsellors took occasion at this time to warn their chief earnestly against yielding to his Tory prejudices in the partnership that was opening.

That chief, in meditating upon its prospects, was in fact more occupied with a problem of personality than with one of political programmes. Two issues of the experiment were possible, but neither suggested hesitation. Lord Randolph's disability for the compromises and self-suppressions of public life had been acutely brought home to the Prime Minister in the previous winter. But his youth and the touch of genius that was in him made all evolutions of character possible. In the larger and more responsible opportunity which was offered by his promotion, he might develop the capacity for discipline which had been lacking, and in that case a brilliant accomplishment was ensured. If, on the other hand, he should prove incapable of such development, a rupture must follow, whatever were the office that he held, and when the moment came he would find less support in the Cabinet and party if his claims had already been recognised to the utmost. Such, roughly speaking, was the reasoning with which Lord Salisbury prepared himself to embark upon what he looked on as a testing experiment. The possibility of either alternative was faced from the first, but so far as could be

discerned from any external expression, his judgment was still in suspense as to their rival probabilities.

Everything went smoothly at the outset. During the brief September session, Lord Randolph surprised even his admirers by the dignity and unprovocative skill of his leadership. The question of the reform of parliamentary procedure—which had caused such Cabinet heartburning in the winter—became, under the combined influence of Parnellite obstruction and a high thermometer, in a fair way to be settled in accordance with the most drastic of his proposals. Lord Salisbury's letters to his wife record his own progress towards conversion.

“Our affairs here are going on pretty well. Randolph did very well last night and has obtained general applause. The Unionists are in a good temper—the Irish very angry. It is thought that they mean to obstruct for a week or so to satisfy their employers—but it remains to be seen whether they will stop then.”
(August 20, 1886.)

“Things go on very slowly and our chances of getting away are not improving. I have received a request that I would go to Balmoral for three or four days. . . . But I have energetically protested that such an arrangement would finally knock me up. Our lives are uneventful enough while dancing attendance on the Irish. Last night Randolph and I dined at a man’s dinner with Arthur, to meet discontented M.P.s,—a tiresome set they were. To-day I have been sent for to console a discontented mother¹—Lady M. Fortunately, there was a steady flow of aged Duchesses calling, and she could only blow me up in brief intervals.”
(August 26.)

“Heat awful, and no immediate prospect of a respite from amendments in the Commons. I sleep generally at Hatfield but have to come up nearly every day.”
(August 30.)

¹ Of a disappointed candidate for office.

"The situation has not improved—except that it has taken to raining instead of blazing. But the parliamentary prospects are worse than ever. . . . Everybody is becoming a convert to the necessity of some kind of clôture. Under the influence of the recent hot weather my principles have entirely broken down." (*September 2.*)

There was a healthy note of mutual chaff in the reason which he assigned, a fortnight later, for not leaving England until the House adjourned. . . . "When Randolph hints that, if I go, he is capable of all kinds of monkey tricks, I feel he can be as good as his word" (*September 17.*)

The first sign of trouble came in his own domain of foreign affairs. This year, once more, Bulgaria broke into the autumn holiday of Europe with a sensational happening; the midnight outbreak of a mutiny in the Prince's palace; his kidnapping by a group of his own officers and conveyance the same night across the frontier; his unexplained disappearance, voluntary or involuntary, for several days following; his reappearance, no one knew from whence, and return to Sofia amidst the acclamations of his people; and, lastly, the immediate silencing of these by a surrender to his adversaries, which had evidently been resolved upon in the interval. The day after his re-arrival in his capital, he issued a proclamation of abdication, and within forty-eight hours had again left the country, this time to vanish finally from the stage of European politics.

The whole episode did not cover a fortnight, and in its detail remained mysterious. But, unlike that of the year before, it did not expand into an international disturbance. A group of native statesmen formed themselves into a regency and were successful in preventing any excuse for external intervention, though for some months the fear of such kept Euro-

pean diplomacy on tenter-hooks. But the incident became the occasion for a discussion on Near East policy in the British Cabinet which inspired the first note of anxiety as to its cohesion that appears in this correspondence.

To the Queen,¹ September 7, 1886.

“Lord Salisbury with his humble duty respectfully submits that a Cabinet was held to-day, chiefly on Foreign Affairs.

“A certain number of the members were averse to the efforts which Lord Iddesleigh and Lord Salisbury had made to induce Prince Alexander to remain ; but as those efforts were quite ineffectual it was not worth while to discuss them. But a larger question was dealt with, which, in the future, may be of supreme importance. A section of the Cabinet showed a strong inclination to depart from the traditional policy of this country of resisting the designs of Russia upon the Balkan Peninsula. Lord R. Churchill, Lord G. Hamilton, and Mr. Smith were the three who took this view. It was not shared by the majority of the Cabinet and therefore will not affect the policy of the Government. But it may at any moment produce difficulties, inside the Cabinet, of a serious kind.”

To Lord Cranbrook, September 8, 1886.

“We had a rather disagreeable discussion in Cabinet, from which it appeared that three of the members—Churchill, Hamilton, and Smith—and possibly Beach—were disposed to abandon all effort to stay the progress of Russia in the Balkan Peninsula, and even to see her in Constantinople without raising any objection. This difference of opinion will cause very serious trouble, I fear, before long.”

“The Cabinet has taken to quarrelling over our

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 201.

old friend, the E.Q. How we shall hold together for twelve months I cannot conceive," was his brief reference to the same dispute in his correspondence with his wife. His fears on this precise point proved uncalled for. Balkan affairs did not in fact become more threatening and there is no record of further Cabinet discussions on the subject. There followed a dropping interchange of letters with Lord Randolph on foreign affairs. As regarded the application of policy to immediate action, the difference between them was slight. Lord Randolph was anxious that England should disinterest herself wholly from Balkan politics, take no initiative, and keep strictly behind the Central Powers. Nothing could have reconciled Lord Salisbury to a permanent renunciation of initiative and he looked upon Bulgarian independence as the surest safeguard against an ultimate breach with Russia. But for more reasons than one he was also opposed to any isolated interference in Bulgarian affairs, and agreed that "we might safely back Austria and Germany."

But Lord Randolph was not content to let well alone or confine his views upon general policy to his chief's ear. He recounts to him long conversations which he has had with the Russian and German ambassadors, in which those views have been put forward with frankness and elaboration. Lord Salisbury makes no direct protest. A hint may be read into his criticism of Count Hatzfeldt's methods :

"He tells more to Rothschild than he does to you ; he tells more to you than he does to me ; and he tells more to me than he does to Iddesleigh,—*the person to whom it is his business to speak.*" (*September 29.*)

Three days later the hint was unmistakable. Lord Salisbury was now at Puys. Lord Randolph had

written to complain of a message of encouragement to Sofia which he thought indicated a purpose of separate action, and had indulged, as a corollary, in a general denunciation of Lord Iddesleigh's policy. Lord Salisbury replied placably ; the message sent was the right one, though he should have preferred it to have been sent in conjunction with other Powers ; he admitted that the management of the Foreign Office was open to criticism : " Many things I press are not done and I am disquieted as to the result. I think Iddesleigh's general views of policy are correct but I do not always sympathise with his methods." Things would, he hoped, be better in this respect when he himself got back to England. But, like his correspondent, he was not happy about foreign affairs, though not, he added, entirely for the same reasons. His own view was that it was of primary importance to arrest Russia's advance towards Constantinople ; he dwelt, as he had done before, on the uncontrollable indignation which her seizure of that city would arouse in this country.

" It is for this reason that I shrink from abandoning ourselves wholly to Bismarck's inspiration—as I think you wish. Germany is quite content that Russia should have Constantinople. Austria is not. I think, therefore, that we ought to give our diplomatic support to Austria for the present. I am therefore rather uneasy about foreign affairs—for I am afraid you *are* prepared to give up Constantinople, and foreign powers will be quick enough to find that divergence out." (October 1, 1886.)

Particularly when the parties to it were in independent communication with foreign representatives. The conversations with the German ambassador continued, hints notwithstanding, and Count Hatzfeldt's reports of them bulk largely in the published correspondence

of the German Foreign Office.¹ In one of them Lord Randolph boasts of his ability to prevent his Government from making concessions to France, and in November Lord Salisbury reports to the Queen that there is opposition in the Cabinet—presumably inspired by the Chancellor of the Exchequer—to certain negotiations with France about the Suez Canal which he and the Foreign Secretary are anxious to press forward. The state of irritation produced in him finds final expression in a letter to Lord George Hamilton, written just after Lord Randolph's resignation. Lord George had criticised the recent policy of the Foreign Office as having been too exclusively dependent on Austria.

To Lord George Hamilton, Christmas Day, 1886.

" You must bear in mind that R. C.'s interference was incessant. I was very anxious to keep the Cabinet together and I deferred to him as much as I possibly could. The result was a rather composite policy. There were two points on which R. C. insisted,—one was that we should show no kind of civility to France, the other that we should not take an isolated or single position with respect to Eastern Europe. The necessary result of the first contention was that we must draw near to the two German Empires ; the result of the other was that, not being allowed to act alone, we could only act in conjunction with Austria, the one State with which we agreed."

In November the autumn Cabinets began. The first meeting was followed by a despairing denunciation of his colleagues from Lord Randolph, reminiscent of similar outpourings in the previous winter : " It is an idle school-boy dream to suppose that Tories

¹ *Germ. Dip. Doc.* vol. i. pp. 251-70 (*Gr. Pol. der Eur.-Kab.* vol. iv. chaps. xxiii. and xxv.).

can legislate. . . . I certainly have not the energy and courage to go on struggling against cliques, as poor Dizzy did all his life" (*November 6*).¹ Lord Salisbury answered with an appeal for patience, accompanied by a painstaking effort to look at things from his correspondent's standpoint. He urged the special compulsion upon Conservatives to legislate so as to satisfy both "classes and masses"—using the phrase with which Mr. Gladstone had recently enriched the vocabulary of politics. "It is evident, therefore, that we must work at less speed and at a lower temperature than our opponents. Our Bills must be tentative and cautious; not sweeping and dramatic. But I believe that, with patience, feeling our way as we go, we may get the one element to concede and the other to forbear." There was no doubt an alternative policy to pursue, in which, "hitting the classes hard," the Government might seek popularity by the production of "drastic and symmetrical" measures. He touched on the reasons which must, in his view, doom such a policy to failure, and concluded, "My counsel, therefore, is strongly against this alternative, and it would be the same if I had no interest in the matter and was merely an observer outside the Ministry advising you. Your rôle should be rather that of a diplomatist trying to bring the opposed sections of the party together—and not that of a Whip trying to keep the slugs up to the collar" (*November 7, 1886*).

This letter had had several predecessors during the last twelve months, both in matter and in manner, but it had no successors. It must itself have been penned more with the object of clearing the writer's conscience than with hope of achieving any substantial result. It must have been early in this month that

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 223.

he came to the conclusion that the experiment had failed and that a breach was inevitable. He did not on that account intermit his mediating efforts ; the game had to be played out to the best of his ability. But the efforts were no longer singly inspired. To prepare against the foreseen rupture and to keep it within the limits of its individual origin became objects which from this time competed with the more immediate one of getting business through. It was impossible for a man of his temperament to be conscious of the presence of such motives without its affecting his manner towards the person concerned. Though their correspondence remained amicable, the old interchange of cordial good wishes and grateful acknowledgment of courtesies disappeared from it during these last six weeks. It must have been the impressions received during this period which inspired Lord Randolph, after his resignation, to complaints of his chief's hardness and coldness ; they could hardly have been suggested by their earlier relations.

In private, Lord Salisbury indulged in the gloomiest forebodings :—predicting a break-up of the party, a forced dissolution with its incalculable outcome, a probable shipwreck of the Union in the general upheaval. To what degree these prophecies represented his real expectation it is impossible to say. With him, a conflict was normally heralded by anticipations of catastrophe, as, once it had begun, it was accompanied by the most sanguine confidence of victory. As regarded the position in the House of Commons the grounds for alarm were indisputable, though Mr. Goschen's adhesion in January prevented their solidity from ever being put to the test. In parliamentary reputation Lord Randolph stood not only a head and shoulders above the other available occupants of the Treasury Bench, but in a class apart. Sir Michael

Hicks Beach, occupied with Ireland, and with trouble developing in his eyesight, had been temporarily withdrawn from the fighting line. Mr. Balfour only entered the Cabinet for the first time in the middle of this month, and his powers of debate, like Mr. Smith's for leadership, were as yet unrevealed. The Treasury Bench, with Lord Randolph eliminated,—nay, with Lord Randolph delivering daily philippics against it from below the gangway,—was not a picture calculated to cheer his chief's imagination. All that could be done was to provide as unsympathetic a background as possible for the central figure, and upon this aim the Prime Minister's gifts for Cabinet diplomacy became now concentrated.

His attitude in Cabinet became more markedly self-effacing, and Ministers, though divided in opinion upon some of the points debated, began to show signs of uneasiness at their chief's passivity. At the Guildhall, after the Government Banquet on November 9, two or three of those who were present clustered round him with insistent whisperings. When he had reached the privacy of his carriage, he reported their urgings to a more resolute attitude towards his aggressive second-in-command,—recalling with a grim smile how, only three months before, the same men had been anxiously warning him against an insufficient display of sympathy with him. “But they are wrong now”; he concluded, as he sank back into the corner of the carriage, “the time is not yet.”

Towards the close of the month there were two meetings of the Cabinet, occupied with inconclusive disputes over the projected Local Government Bill, at which the Prime Minister's complaisance seems to have roused a more general protest. Lord Cranbrook, resting on his seniority and ancient friendship, was outspoken in his criticism.

From Lord Cranbrook, November 23, 1886.

“ MY DEAR SALISBURY—Our last two Cabinets have alarmed me lest there should be a breakdown on the point of Local Government and so an opening made for the anti-Union policy which we were formed to counteract. . . . It is to you that I look to harmonise our views and bring about unity of action. You must forgive me for saying that you have too much self-renunciation for a Prime Minister and that you have rights which you forgo in guiding our deliberations. . . . The position requires your distinct lead and your just self-assertion. I hope that you will not think this letter intrusive, but I am so convinced of the gravity of our condition that I cannot be silent.”

Lord Salisbury, put on his defence, stated his dilemma with brutal directness. Apparently the point now in dispute was one upon which the rest of the Cabinet except the Chancellor of the Exchequer were united. He insisted that the whole machinery of Local Government should be at once set up ; they were nervous as to the working of the elective principle in the control of the Poor Law and wished, therefore, to limit the change this year to the provision of County Councils, leaving the District Councils to be dealt with later.

To Lord Cranbrook, November 25, 1886.

“ MY DEAR CRANBROOK—Many thanks for your letter.

“ What you call my self-renunciation is merely an effort to deal with an abnormal and very difficult state of things. It arises from the peculiarities of Churchill. Beach having absolutely refused to lead, Churchill is the only possible leader in the House of Commons—and his ability is unquestionable. But he is wholly out of sympathy with the rest of the Cabinet, and, being

besides of a wayward and headstrong disposition, he is far from mitigating his resistance by the method of it. As his office of Leader of the House gives him a claim to be heard on every question, the machine is moving along with the utmost friction both in home and foreign affairs. My self-renunciation is only an attempt—a vain attempt—to pour oil upon the creaking and groaning machinery. Like you, I am penetrated with a sense of the danger which the collapse of our Government would bring about: otherwise I should not have undertaken—or should have quickly abandoned—the task of leading an orchestra in which the first fiddle plays one tune and everybody else, including myself, wishes to play another.

“I am in some despair about the present difficulty. I am to see Hartington to-morrow evening, and I will try whether some *modus vivendi* can be arranged. I feel deeply the danger of trusting the administration of the Poor Law to an electorate, to which never, in town or county, it has been entrusted before, and which consists of a majority of men whose interest it is that the administration should be lax and costly. Perhaps we may discover some security—but ‘there is nothing less secure than a security !’ It seems to me, look at it how you will, rather like leaving the cat in charge of the cream jug.

“My idea of getting round the difficulty was to put off the Poor Law part of it until 1888; and by that time many things may have happened, and at all events we shall know more of the feelings of our own party. But I have no doubt that on this point, of taking the whole organisation together, Churchill has the Unionists with him—which aggravates our difficulties considerably.

“After I have seen Hartington I will write to you again.”

He need not have been alarmed. Lord Randolph, as it turned out, had obtained his information through Mr. Chamberlain. Lord Hartington, while admitting

that his followers would be disappointed by the introduction of an incomplete measure, was as much impressed with the Poor Law danger as his Tory ally. The way out of the difficulty which, after some discussion, he suggested, was that the Government should drop the Bill altogether for this session, substituting for it a Local Government Bill for Ireland. Since that would have to be drawn on more Conservative lines than the English one, it would make, as he pointed out sympathetically, a good preparation for the latter in the following year. Lord Salisbury was willing enough, and communicated the proposal to his lieutenant with whom it proved effective in an unintended fashion. It would have involved a far greater postponement of Tory democratic pledges than any course yet suggested. Lord Randolph rejected it with warmth, and acceded, as to the lesser of two evils, to his own chief's plan.

One difficulty was out of the way, but it was but one symptom relieved in a chronic malady. There was an Allotment Bill which Lord Salisbury had already criticised severely, and there was an heroic Budget on the way, which, if nothing else had intervened, must certainly have roused a Tory revolt. And, more than these, there was the constant assumption that opposition was an outrage and that concession must always come from the many to the one. Meanwhile Cabinet criticism of its chief's lack of self-assertion began to meet with a responsive echo from outside. Lord Salisbury had been chary of oratory that autumn. Except at the Guildhall where, according to orthodox precedent, he confined himself to foreign affairs and generalities on the Unionist cause, he spoke not at all until December. Lord Randolph, on the other hand, had preceded the Cabinet meetings by two speeches addressed to

enthusiastic mass meetings on a colossal scale at Dartford and Bradford. He maintained with justification that he had advocated nothing at either that was not within the corners of Lord Salisbury's Newport programme ; but he had invested its items with so Radical a clothing,—had, in fact, so advertised their "drastic and symmetrical" quality, that he had stirred a muttering alarm among the basic elements of Conservatism. Suspicion as to the Prime Minister's readiness to efface himself behind his Chancellor of the Exchequer gradually took form in newspaper hints and wire-pullers' confidential reports.

On December 8 he broke silence at a meeting of City Conservatives — reassuringly to the anxious section among his followers. Resistance on behalf of the fundamental principles of the Constitution "was not that hopeless matter which some would like to induce you to imagine." "The Conservatives were quite as Conservative as ever." "Undoubtedly there were points upon which, if such came forward, they should be compelled to differ from their allies, or some of their allies, among the Liberal Unionists ; but fortunately these points were in the background." And he added a compliment which was none the less sincere for being timely : "The straightforwardness and simplicity of intention with which we have been met by Lord Hartington and those who follow him have made co-operation with them a very easy task indeed." There must be no chink left open for suspicion to connect the Unionist allies with the domestic crisis which might now be looked for at any moment.

It started, in fact, a week later, and its progress to a conclusion was rapid. Lord Randolph was drawing up his Budget and, like other Chancellors of the Exchequer before and since, found the estimates submitted by the spending departments too high.

He had pledged himself in his speeches to a drastic economy and was absolute in his rejection of them. But his case was not a good one for defence. The combined estimates of War Office and Admiralty were actually lower than those of the year before ; a war-panic was reaching its height that winter in Europe ; no one could suspect the two departmental chiefs, Mr. W. H. Smith and Lord George Hamilton, of having any taint of militarism in their composition. They both declared themselves unable in conscience to abate their demands, and, on the 15th, Lord Randolph asked for an interview with the Prime Minister on the question. When contrasted with earlier efforts for the avoidance of Cabinet catastrophe, the brevity, no less than the purport of the response, proclaimed a decision taken :

To Lord Randolph Churchill, December 15, 1886.

“MY DEAR RANDOLPH—I will be in Downing Street at half-past three. I have got to go to Windsor at a quarter to five. . . .

“The Cabinet, happily, not I, will have to decide the controversy between you and Smith. But it will be a serious responsibility to refuse the demands of a War Minister so little imaginative as Smith, especially at such a time.

“It was curious that, two days ago, I was listening here to the most indignant denunciations of Smith for his economy—from Wolseley.

“I am rather surprised at G. Hamilton being able to reduce so much. I hope it is all right.”

In the interview at Downing Street the Chancellor of the Exchequer adhered to his insistence, but refused to bring the difference before the Cabinet for discussion. The next day he introduced his Budget proposals to his colleagues, and noted to his Treasury

officials the silence in which they were received. Mr. Smith wrote to ask that they should be circulated in print for consideration during the holidays, and confided to the Prime Minister his doubts as to their ever passing the House of Commons. Lord Salisbury himself, after a rapid calculation from the figures recited, sent a brief and rather bitterly worded protest against the extra burden which they would lay on the country gentlemen. But in fact they were already only of academic interest. They were brought before the Cabinet on Friday the 17th ; on the following Monday, the 20th, there were final interviews between Lord Randolph and his two resistant colleagues ; that evening he wrote from Windsor, where he was staying as a guest, to tell the Prime Minister that, unless a reduction of the estimates was agreed to, of which he had no hope, he must ask to be relieved from his office.¹ He had informed Mr. Smith and Lord George of his intention, and both reported that they had pressed upon him the inadequacy of the reason given for inflicting such a blow upon the Unionist cause as his resignation would be. His reply to both had been that this question of estimates was only the culminating cause,—his quarrel was equally with the whole legislative programme and foreign policy of the Government. Mr. Smith's comment in communicating this reply to Lord Salisbury was illuminating as to the state at which Cabinet feeling had arrived by this stage. “It comes to this,—is he to be *the Government*? If you are willing that he should be, I shall be delighted, but I could not go on on such conditions.”

Lord Randolph complained to this same colleague at being kept waiting two days for an answer to his communication from Windsor. It is suggestive of the reason for the delay that a letter from Hatfield,

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 234.

addressed to Sir Michael Hicks Beach in Dublin, bears the intervening date. It informs him of the ultimatum just received, and explains the reasons which make concession impossible. Though Sir Michael's sympathies as a squire had placed him on the extreme right in opposition to Lord Randolph's views on County government, his special intimacy with him in the House of Commons and the fascination which the younger man had long exercised over him, may well have led the Prime Minister to look upon him as being still the weakest spot in the edifice of Cabinet solidarity.

To Lord Randolph Churchill, December 22, 1886.

“ MY DEAR RANDOLPH—I have your letter of the 20th from Windsor. You tell me—as you told me orally on Thursday—that thirty-one millions for the two Services is very greatly in excess of what you can consent to ; that you are pledged up to the eyes to large reductions of expenditure, and cannot change your mind in the matter ; and that, as you feel certain of receiving no support from me or from the Cabinet in this view, you must resign your office and withdraw from the Government. On the other hand, I have a letter from Smith telling me that he feels bound to adhere to the Estimates which he shewed you on Monday, and that he declines to postpone, as you had wished him to do, the expenditure which he thinks necessary for the fortification of coaling stations, military posts, and mercantile ports.

“ In this unfortunate state of things, I have no choice but to express my full concurrence with the view of Hamilton and Smith, and my dissent from yours,—though I say it, both on personal and public grounds, with very deep regret. The outlook on the Continent is very black. It is not too much to say that the chances are in favour of war at an early date, and when war has once broken out, we cannot be

secure from the danger of being involved in it. The undefended state of many of our ports and coaling stations is notorious, and the necessity of protecting them has been urged by a strong Commission, and has been admitted on both sides in debate. To refuse to take measures for their protection at this juncture would be to incur the gravest possible responsibility. Speaking more generally, I should hesitate to refuse at this time any supplies which men so moderate in their demands as Smith and Hamilton declared to be necessary for the safety of the country.

"The issue is so serious that it thrusts aside all personal and party considerations. But I regret more than I can say the view you take of it, for no one knows better than you how injurious to the public interests at this juncture your withdrawal from the Government may be.

"In presence of your very strong and decisive language, I can only again express my very profound regret."

Lord Randolph did not imitate his chief's dilatoriness. A special messenger brought back his response, in the form of a definite resignation, by the midnight train to Hatfield the same evening. A county ball was in progress there, Lord Randolph's mother and youngest sister being of the house-party. So was Princess Mary, the Duchess of Teck, with her daughter, Princess May.¹ Lord Salisbury was sitting by Princess Mary on the sofa, watching the dancers, when the box containing Lord Randolph's missive was brought to him, and she used often afterwards to make reproachful fun of the deceptive suavity with which, having glanced at the contents, he continued their conversation with apparently unbroken interest. But he drew his own deductions from the promptitude of the resigning Minister's action. The next morning, when

¹ H.M. Queen Mary. She married King George V., then Duke of York, July 1893.

he and Lady Salisbury were called, she reminded him that they must get up hurriedly as some of their guests, of whom the Duchess of Marlborough was one, were leaving by an early train. "Send for *The Times* first," was his sleepy response—and, in reply to her bewildered questioning,—“Randolph resigned in the middle of the night and, if I know my man, it will be in *The Times* this morning”;—in which case, as he pointed out, it would be more tactful to oversleep themselves and avoid a leave-taking which would be embarrassing to all parties. *The Times* was duly sent for, and in majestic headlines proclaimed the accuracy of his guess.

The dreaded blow had fallen. The colleagues who wrote on the first news of it were unanimous in indignation, but also in conviction of catastrophe. It was impossible that the Government could long survive the blow; the disruption of the Empire was probably the price ultimately to be paid. Sir Michael Beach advised instant resignation unless the Unionists would consent to a coalition: there was no use, he said, in ignoring the extent of the disaster. It was some days before reports coming in from the country made apparent how much these alarms were exaggerated. Conservatives in the constituencies had no doubts; scarcely a voice was raised among them, either then or subsequently, in support of the retiring Minister. It was practically a universal repudiation.

Various explanations have been forthcoming of this sudden collapse of an influence with the Conservative electorate which had appeared supreme—a collapse which, in its completeness, carried with it subsequent impotence in the House of Commons. It might be cited as one more proof of the purely tactical appeal of the Tory Democratic creed—recent victory at the polls having deprived it of all its charm. Or it might

be quoted as showing the solid hold which Lord Salisbury had established upon his party's confidence, though with smaller witness than his lieutenant's in outspoken popular applause. But probably the strongest force at work was the instinctive British recalcitrance to an exaggerated personal claim. Englishmen have never welcomed Cæsarism as a refuge from their difficulties. Lord Randolph's isolation accentuated this aspect of his action. A "split" in the Cabinet might have issued in some degree of party cleavage by the mere fact of compelling outside opinion to judge and take sides upon the merits of the quarrel. But the unaccompanied resignation was read—and read truly—as simply a challenge of individual right, and the matter in dispute never seems to have been even discussed. It was also a challenge which was peculiarly incongruous at that time. It followed quickly upon an election campaign, whose most prominent feature to provincial Tories had been its demand, cruelly felt in many constituencies, for the suppression of all personal feelings for the sake of the one great Cause. The Cause was still there; Lord Salisbury was acclaimed throughout the country as the "standard-bearer of the Union," while Lord Randolph was condemned out of hand as the leader who had failed his followers in the face of the enemy.

A few days after his resignation, lunching at a friend's house, he met Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, who, as an ardent Unionist, tried to convince him of the iniquity of his proceeding. In the conversation which followed, the judge became impressed with the part which sensitive feeling had played in determining his action and also with the hold which his late chief still had, at least over his imagination. "Thinking it might do good," he wrote to report the substance of the talk to Lord Salisbury. The resigning Minister,

while justifying himself for having tried, in the interests of the Union itself, to persuade its defenders to a more popular policy, dwelt upon the “ coldness and indifference ” with which the Prime Minister had listened to his urgings : “ To argue with him is like arguing with a rock ” ; and he intimated that his resignation was largely due to this cause. He spoke of him at the same time with the deepest respect : “ He has a mighty intellect.” “ He might have made what he pleased of me.”

Lord Salisbury was in a too great exasperation of spirit to be touched by these tributes.

To Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, December 30, 1886.

“ His opinions on several subjects were not those of his colleagues, and he did not urge them in a manner to make them more acceptable. But I think you will find, if you have occasion to consult any of his colleagues, that in their judgment the utmost forbearance and concession were employed in order to maintain harmony between him and them. I was much blamed by several of them for the extent to which I gave way. On the matter which ultimately severed us, I could not have given way without being false to all my own convictions, nor without losing two of the ablest members of the Government. Whether my coldness of manner aggravated these difficulties, of course, I cannot judge. To my own eyes, I have been incessantly employed for the past five years in making things smooth between him and others, both by word and act. But, after all, coldness of manner may be an excuse for an erring wife, but not for an overbearing colleague.

“ The two circumstances which made it especially difficult to work with him were his resolution to make the interests of his Budget overrule the wishes and the necessities of all the other Departments, and, secondly, his friendship for Chamberlain which made him insist

that we should accept that statesman as our guide in internal politics."

Beyond this opposition of opinion lay a temperament which presented the characteristics of extreme youth. "Unless he can develop more proportion in his views, and more consideration for others in carrying them out, he will not be able to work in office with any Ministry, no matter from what school of politics it is drawn."

The battle being now engaged, Lord Salisbury's habitual confidence in conflict reappeared. His letters to the Queen and his colleagues during this week do not re-echo the prevailing agitation. He was anxious as to the weak debating powers of his Commons' front bench, but otherwise refused to admit defeat.

To Lord Cranbrook, Christmas Day, 1886.

"... As to the future, it is evident that our existence will be precarious unless we can strengthen our front bench in the House of Commons. I have written to Hartington merely generally to ascertain what his views are as to a junction, and telling him that, individually, my views are what they were in July. But I have spoken for myself alone."

There is no record of the hurried telegram which figured in the press at the time. Lord Hartington was at Rome, and started for England immediately on receiving the Prime Minister's letter. The Queen had supported its invitation with personal letters of her own, addressed both to him and to Mr. Goschen. In thanking her, Lord Salisbury expressed small hopes of Liberal Unionist consent :

"But Your Majesty will have done your utmost and, if they will not join the Ministry, the latter must fight on to the best of their ability. The weakness of

the front bench will be a great hindrance ;—but otherwise Lord R. Churchill's secession will not make the work more difficult.” (*December 26.*)

Three days later, a letter to Sir Henry Holland strikes a more definitely defiant and sanguine note.

To Sir Henry Holland, December 29, 1886.

“ MY DEAR HOLLAND—Your letter is dictated by the great kindness you have always shewn me.

“ But I have observed that in ministerial crises, the people who are most ready to give up their places are always the people whom no Minister would part with willingly. I do not get similar offers from the other sort of people. . . . I hope,—or rather I should say I wish—for Unionist assistance. But I never for a moment dreamt, if I was not successful, of giving up. We must fight on for the cause entrusted to us till the power of doing so is taken from us. But I by no means despair. The chess-board is in the oddest condition,—but it is impossible to guess who will win.”

Lord Hartington reached England that evening, and on the 31st, having intermediately consulted with his friends, saw Lord Salisbury and again refused the offered Premiership. He would withdraw his refusal on one hypothesis, which, however, was proudly dismissed by the Conservative leader.

Telegram to the Queen,¹ December 31, 1886.

“ With humble duty. Lord Hartington replies, as his own opinion and the unanimous view of his friends, that he could not, without losing all influence over the Liberals in the country, either join a Conservative Government or form a Coalition Government. He might do this last to avoid a dissolution, or if the Conservatives, by resignation, declared that they were unable to carry on the Government ; but in no other

¹ *Letters of Queen Victoria*, 3rd series, vol. i. p. 240.

case. I said I could not make, on behalf of the Conservative party, a confession which would not be true and which would be humiliating. But I pointed out to him the many advantages to the Unionist cause, inside and outside Parliament, which would result from his taking the Premiership. . . . He adhered, however, to his opinion. He was hearty in his promises of support even if Mr. Chamberlain left us ; but he thought Mr. Chamberlain's opinion unchanged. I then made certain propositions as to which he has gone to talk to Mr. Goschen."

The application to Mr. Goschen, strongly supported by his own leader, was successful after a day or two's hesitation on his part. On Sunday, January 2, he sent a message to say that, though unable to abandon the name of Liberal, he would join Lord Salisbury's Cabinet if, after a conversation with him upon current questions of home and foreign policy, no insuperable grounds of difference appeared. The interview took place the next day, and Mr. Goschen accepted the Chancellorship of the Exchequer. This adhesion of one of the most brilliant debaters and able financiers of the day effectively removed all danger of the Government's being outclassed in the House of Commons.

But his resolve to remain a titular Liberal made it impossible for him to undertake the leadership of the Conservative majority. Lord Salisbury chose Mr. Smith for the task,—an appointment which turned out to be one of the most successful of his Premiership. The new leader had, however, to be provided with a workless office ; the Prime Minister surrendered to him that of the First Lordship of the Treasury, and since he could not himself be left without a department, was compelled to resume that of Foreign Affairs.

Such, at least, was the sequence of necessities upon which he dwelt in his telegram to Lord Iddesleigh,

who, at an early stage of the crisis, had expressed his willingness to make way if his place were required for new combinations. But there was another reason for taking advantage of this offer, of whose genesis no record remains but in a letter to Sir Michael Beach, written a day or two after these changes had been made and published. Lord Salisbury having referred to various reasons which had necessitated the shifting of offices, went on :

“ There was another consideration also which pressed upon me. To my extreme surprise, I found Goschen very strongly urging—almost insisting—that Iddesleigh should not stay at the Foreign Office. Bearing in mind your own strong view, I felt bound to give effect to this. Goschen wants this kept a secret and I do not know to what extent he would have made it a *sine qua non*. But if it was to be done, it could only be done *now*, without brutally hurting Iddesleigh’s feelings.” (*January 6, 1887.*)

Lord Iddesleigh’s lack of vital energy was increasing with his increasing failure in health, and was no doubt responsible for that slowness of method to which Lord Salisbury had alluded in his autumn letter to Lord Randolph. The “ extreme surprise ” which he expressed at Mr. Goschen’s protest was presumably due to an assumption that he had himself been in a position to counteract this defect so far as to save it from becoming recognisable outside. No other complaint as to Lord Iddesleigh’s conduct of affairs appears in his correspondence. He was agreed with him in policy, trusted his judgment, believed in his ability, and rejoiced in his rarer quality of immovable courage. If, as is most probable, the lack of vigour did cause him uneasiness, he gave no expression to it. His self-consciousness of intolerance of any methods save his own in this particular department, his sensi-

tive loyalty towards the friend whose ambition he had already been twice instrumental in disappointing, his championship of him against the prejudices entertained against him by both Lord Randolph and Sir Michael, would all have contributed to his hesitation and silence.

Mr. Goschen's intervention created a new situation. Apart from its authority as a quasi-condition of his adhesion, he spoke not only with complete personal impartiality but from inside knowledge. His mission to Egypt some years before, and a twelve months' experience as special ambassador at Constantinople, had made him free of the diplomatic fraternity, both British and Foreign. He had kept up his relations with them, and his urgency was representative of a wider opinion. The mere fact that that opinion had become conscious of defect was in itself conclusive of its importance.

It had therefore become necessary to take action, and the requirements of reconstruction, if utilised without delay, might mitigate its hardship. Lord Salisbury was careful to enforce, universally and exclusively, the technical explanation which he gave to Lord Iddesleigh himself. Even to the Queen he offered no other, and in his confidential communications to Ministers it was as much insisted upon as the sole cause for the transference as in his public announcements.

It was in these last that his efforts to spare his colleague's feelings broke down. Mr. Goschen was anxious to have the company of a Liberal Unionist peer in the Ministry; an invitation had been sent to Lord Lansdowne, who was in Canada at the time as Governor-General, and his answer had to be awaited before the re-arrangement could be completed. Lord Salisbury kept back the message to Lord Iddesleigh

till he could write fully and, with all circumstance of private and friendly consultation, present the necessity for making use of his offer of withdrawal. But that Monday evening he spoke of his own intended return to the Foreign Office in preparatory confidence to Mr. Alfred Austin, for the general guidance of the *Standard* newspaper, expressly prohibiting any present reference to it. Through some mistake in the Prime Minister's office, Lord Iddesleigh's withdrawal leaked out, as one of many vague and unauthorised rumours, to a press agency. The editor of the *Standard*,—as much to Mr. Austin's indignation as to the Prime Minister's,—considered that the fact relieved him of any obligation of secrecy and published the news the next morning with all the certainty of authorised announcement,—altering at the same time the article, which had carefully excluded allusion to it, which Mr. Austin had communicated. Thus, Lord Iddesleigh, who was finishing his Christmas holiday at his own home near Exeter, learnt of his removal through a newspaper known to be in communication with the Prime Minister,—and that Prime Minister one of his oldest friends,—before receiving any intimation of it from himself.

Though it did not require the explanation which quickly followed for him to exonerate Lord Salisbury from any intentional slight, the wound could not but be felt. He replied, indeed, with perfect good humour and dignity to the telegram and covering letter which were hastily despatched as soon as the position was realised. He referred gently to the embarrassment to which he had been put among enquiring friends and neighbours by the newspaper announcement, but said that he had always held it as a principle that members of a Cabinet should take any work or “no-work” that their chief thought it right in the public interest

to offer them, and therefore, "though I leave the Foreign Office with regret, I accept your decision cheerfully." Indeed, the assurances which his family gave later left no doubt as to his original offer of withdrawal having been sincerely intended. But when Lord Salisbury, boldly risking Lord Lansdowne's possible competition for the place, telegraphed the following day to invite his re-entry to the Cabinet as President of the Council, he was refused with a briefly worded decisiveness that convinced him of the failure of his efforts. Perhaps he exaggerated in imagination the pain which he had so unwittingly inflicted. The retiring Minister was to come up to town the following week, and arranged to call and see him, when he hoped to be able—face to face—to remove whatever soreness existed.

But it was not to be. Lord Iddesleigh came to London on the 12th, and after calling at the Foreign Office, where his secretaries afterwards reported him to have been in good spirits and to have talked cheerfully of his approaching retirement, walked across to 10 Downing Street. In the ante-room, while the messenger went forward to announce his arrival, he fell down in a faint. He was lifted on to a sofa, and died twenty minutes later in Lord Salisbury's presence, without having regained consciousness. Three or four years before, his doctor, in a confidential report to his colleague, had pronounced him able for present work, but had added a warning : "The glass is cracked and may break at any moment."

The Prime Minister received several letters of sympathy in the shock that he had suffered. There were touching messages from Lord Iddesleigh's family, resentful of brutalities which had appeared in the press as to the recent relations between the two men. They cannot be quoted publicly in any detail " You

and she know," wrote one of the sons, conveying a message from his mother, " how true and sincere was the affection he bore you," and he went on to speak of how his father would have suffered from the " slanders and calumnies " which had been uttered against the friend whom he had left behind. Lord Randolph wrote, and his letter exemplified notably the qualities which, in spite of all defects, made him so singularly attractive a character to his fellows. At the risk of being misunderstood he could not refrain, he said, from expressing his great grief at the shock which his late chief, now so widely separated from him politically, had sustained. Candidly admitting the part which he himself had had in bringing vexation upon the dead man, he used the confession to recall that, " never in public life did any man have a truer friend and colleague than Lord Iddesleigh had in you," and to aver from his own experience " the unwavering loyalty with which you invariably supported him, checked all depreciation, and stimulated constant recognition of his public services."¹ Few men at such a moment would have brought their own failure towards the dead to witness to the consolation which, as he had the fine instinct to recognise, was that of which his correspondent stood most in need. The letter went home, and brought a reply in which Lord Salisbury, confident of comprehension, abandoned the reserve, which he habitually maintained on this experience, even to those near to him, and expressed some of the complicated pain which he felt.

To Lord Randolph Churchill, January 14, 1887.

" MY DEAR RANDOLPH—I am very grateful to you for the kind sympathy expressed in your letter of yesterday, and am very much touched by it. Your

¹ *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, vol. ii. p. 277.

testimony to my bearing towards our old friend in the past is thoughtful and generous.

"It was a very painful scene that I witnessed on Wednesday in Downing Street. I had never happened to see any one die before—and therefore, even apart from the circumstances, the suddenness of this unexpected death would have been shocking. But here was, in addition, the thought of our thirty years' companionship in political life, and the reflection that now, just before this sudden parting, by some strange misunderstanding which it is hopeless to explain, I had, I believe, for the first time in my life, seriously wounded his feelings. As I looked upon the dead body stretched before me, I felt that politics was a cursed profession. I have received very kind and considerate letters from his family.

"Thanking you again for the thoughtfulness of your letter."

Except for one or two formal notes, these letters were the last in their correspondence. It was well, perhaps, that they should have embodied that curiously isolated strain of sympathy which, throughout their brief political association, appeared recurrently across their normal opposition in character and temper.

The association was at an end. Lord Randolph forbore that session any attack upon his late colleagues and soon after its opening went abroad. The reconstructed Cabinet was completed by the transference of Mr. Edward Stanhope to take Mr. Smith's place at the War Office, and by Sir Henry Holland's admission to it as Colonial Secretary. It pursued its way in unbroken internal peace, though for the next few months amidst stormy surroundings. Irish Nationalists saw to it that the warning of Coercion as being the inevitable alternative to Home Rule should not tarry in fulfilment. Crime, disorder, and lawlessness again became rampant over the whole of southern Ireland,

and the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, which was introduced in the spring, dominated the rest of the parliamentary session. It differed from its predecessors in being a permanent addition to the statute book, and the succession of "exceptional" Acts, whose periodic lapses and renewals had kept both Ireland and Westminster in agitation for forty years, ceased with its passing. The Parnellites, now reinforced on most occasions by the official Gladstonian opposition, fought it through every stage with a resolute obstruction which culminated at intervals in violent "scenes," and effectually stopped the way for all other business. The sessional programme which had occupied those troubled November Cabinets fell all but stillborn.

The struggle is mainly worthy of record for the two personal assets of enduring value with which, in its indirect results, it endowed the Conservative party. When Lord Hartington in the previous November was urging upon Lord Salisbury a precedence for Ireland over Great Britain in the matter of Local Government, he had used the argument that another "Irish session" would healthily consolidate his own party against separatist influences. The event, though otherwise arrived at, proved him right. Some half-dozen of the Radical Unionist group, finding their position in debate intolerably at war with their traditions, returned, it is true, to the Gladstonian fold. But with the majority it was not so, and their leader in especial,—always an upholder of "strong government,"—threw himself hotly into the struggle on the Unionist side. Sympathy with his fellow-combatants was strengthened, hostility to his alienated friends was embittered, and by the end of that session Mr. Chamberlain had made great strides towards whole-hearted co-operation with the Conservatives.

The other personal gain to the party was more complete and less foreseeable. Sir Michael Hicks Beach's eyesight had got rapidly worse, and in March, as a necessary condition for saving it, he had to cease all work and resign his office. Lord Salisbury, more daring than he always showed himself in his appointments, selected his nephew, Mr. Arthur Balfour, as his successor. He had only recently joined the Cabinet, had had little administrative experience and, except among a few acute observers, had acquired no more than a secondary reputation as a House of Commons speaker. The post to which he was promoted was not of so enviable a nature as to inspire any charge of nepotism in the appointment. It was said that, on hearing of it, an Irish member grimly observed, "We have killed Forster, blinded Beach, and smashed up Trevelyan,—what shall we do with this weakling?" But, apparently, their challenge, and the more sinister one that the new Chief Secretary met with in Ireland itself, proved to be the spur required to rouse latent powers into activity. During the months that followed, the House of Commons witnessed the rapid evolution of the most brilliant parliamentarian of his generation, and Ireland that of the most triumphantly successful administrator that she had known.

These interdependent struggles with revolt in Ireland, and with its sympathisers in the House of Commons, filled the stage of home politics for many months. Lord Salisbury's contribution with regard to them was of necessity limited to that of reference and counsel, and the interest of his work became from this time predominantly concentrated in his department.

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